(51) International Patent Classification 6 :	A1	(11) International Publication Number:	WO 97/28261
C12N 15/12, 15/62, 15/70, 15/85, 5/10, 1/21, C07K 14/435, C12Q 1/37, G01N 33/553		(43) International Publication Date:	7 August 1997 (07.08.97)

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US97/01457

(22) International Filing Date: 31 January 1997 (31.01.97)

(30) Priority Data:
08/594,575   31 January 1996 (31.01.96)   US

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(81) Designated States: AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GE, HU, IL, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, UZ, VN, ARIPO patent (KE, LS, MW, SD, SZ, UG), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published
With international search report.
Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.

(54) Title: TANDEM FLUORESCENT PROTEIN CONSTRUCTS

(57) Abstract

This invention provides tandem fluorescent protein constructs including a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a linker moiety that couples the donor and acceptor moieties. The donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer which is eliminated upon cleavage. The constructs are useful in enzymatic assays.

TANDEM FLUORESCENT PROTEIN CONSTRUCTS

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Serial Number 08/594575, filed January 31, 1996.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Proteases play essential roles in many disease processes such as Alzheimer's, hypertension, inflammation, apoptosis, and AIDS. Compounds that block or enhance their activity have potential as therapeutic agents. Because the normal substrates of peptidases are linear peptides and because established procedures exist for making non-peptidic analogs, compounds that effect the activity of proteases are natural subjects of combinatorial chemistry. Screening compounds produced by combinatorial chemistry requires convenient enzymatic assays.

The most convenient existing assays for proteases are based on fluorescence resonance energy transfer from a donor fluorophore to a quencher placed at opposite ends of a short peptide chain containing the potential cleavage site. Knight CG, "Fluorimetric assays of proteolytic enzymes," *Methods in Enzymol.* (1995) 248:18-34. Proteolysis separates the fluorophore and quencher, resulting in increased intensity in the emission of the donor fluorophore. Existing protease assays use short peptide substrates incorporating unnatural chromophoric amino acids, assembled by solid phase peptide synthesis. However, solid phase synthesis poses certain problems of effort and expense.

It is useful to perform enzymatic assays *in vivo*, in order to more closely mimic conditions in which intracellular proteases act. Conventional artificial substrates prepared by solid-phase synthesis would require microinjection into

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individual cells, which is impractical as a high-throughput
screen. Also, short unfolded peptides are generally rapidly
degraded by nonspecific mechanisms inside cells.

5   The Edans fluorophore is the current mainstay of
existing fluorometric assays. Fluorophores with greater
extinction coefficients and quantum yields are desirable. The
Edans fluorophore often is coupled with a non-fluorescent
quencher such as Dabcyl. However, assays performed with such
agents rely on the absolute measurement of fluorescence from the
10   donor. This amount is contaminated by other factors including
turbidity or background absorbances of the sample, fluctuations
in the excitation intensity, and variations in the absolute
amount of substrate.

15   SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION
       This invention provides tandem fluorescent protein
constructs and methods for using them in enzymatic assays both
in vitro and *in vivo*. Tandem fluorescent protein constructs
comprise a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor
20   fluorescent protein moiety and a linker moiety that couples the
donor and acceptor moieties, wherein the donor and acceptor
moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer when the
donor moiety is excited. The fluorescent protein moieties can
be *Aequorea*-related fluorescent protein moieties, such as green
25   fluorescent protein and blue fluorescent protein. In one
aspect, the linker moiety comprises a cleavage recognition site
for an enzyme, and is, preferably, a peptide of between 5 and 50
amino acids. In one embodiment, the construct is a fusion
protein in which the donor moiety, the peptide moiety and the
30   acceptor moiety are part of a single polypeptide.
       This invention also provides recombinant nucleic acids
coding for expression of tandem fluorescent protein constructs
in which a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor
fluorescent protein moiety and a peptide linker moiety are

encoded in a single polypeptide. The invention also provides
expression vectors comprising expression control sequences
operatively linked to a recombinant nucleic acid coding for the
expression of a tandem fluorescent protein construct, as well as
host cells transfected with those expression vectors.

The tandem constructs of this invention are useful in
assays for determining whether a sample contains an enzyme. The
methods involve contacting the sample with a tandem fluorescent
protein construct. The donor moiety is excited. Then the
degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the sample
is determined. A degree of fluorescence resonance energy
transfer that is lower than an expected amount indicates the
presence of an enzyme. The degree of fluorescence resonance
energy transfer in the sample can be determined as a function of
the amount of fluorescence from the donor moiety, the amount of
fluorescence from the acceptor donor moiety, the ratio of the
amount of fluorescence from the donor moiety to the amount of
fluorescence from the acceptor moiety or the excitation state
lifetime of the donor moiety.

The assay also is useful for determining the amount of
enzyme in a sample by determining the degree of fluorescence
resonance energy transfer at a first and second time after
contact between the enzyme and the tandem construct, and
determining the difference in the degree of fluorescence
resonance energy transfer. The difference in the degree of
fluorescence resonance energy transfer reflects the amount of
enzyme in the sample.

The invention also provides methods for determining
the amount of activity of an enzyme in a cell. The methods
involve providing a cell that expresses a tandem fluorescent
protein construct, for example by transfecting the cell with an
appropriate expression vector. The cell is exposed to light in
order to excite the donor moiety. Then the degree of
fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the cell is

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determined. The degree of fluorescence resonance energy
transfer reflects to the amount of enzyme activity in the cell.

Similarly, the invention provides methods of
determining the amount of activity of an enzyme in a sample from
an organism. The methods involve providing a sample from an
organism having a cell that expresses a tandem fluorescent
protein construct. The donor moiety in the sample is excited.
Then the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the
sample is determined. The degree of fluorescence resonance
energy transfer reflects the amount of enzyme activity in the
cell.

The assay methods also can be used to determine
whether a compound alters the activity of an enzyme, i.e.,
screening assays. The methods involve contacting a sample
containing an amount of the enzyme with the compound and with a
tandem fluorescent protein construct; exciting the donor moiety;
determining the amount of enzyme activity in the sample as a
function of the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer
in the sample; and comparing the amount of activity in the
sample with a standard activity for the same amount of the
enzyme. A difference between the amount of enzyme activity in
the sample and the standard activity indicates that the compound
alters the activity of the enzyme.

Similar methods, are useful for determining whether a
compound alters the activity of an enzyme in a cell. The
methods involve providing first and second cells that express a
tandem fluorescent protein construct; contacting the first cell
with an amount of the compound; contacting the second cell with
a different amount of the compound; exciting the donor moiety in
the first and second cell; determining the degree of
fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the first and second
cells; and comparing the degree of fluorescence resonance energy
transfer in the first and second cells. A difference in the
degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer indicates that

the compound alters the activity of the enzyme.

Assays of the invention are also useful for determining and characterizing substrate cleavage sequences of proteases or for identifying proteases, such as orphan proteases. In one embodiment the method involves the replacement of a defined linker moiety amino acid sequence with one that contains a randomized selection of amino acids. A library of fluorescent protein moieties each linked by a randomized linker moiety can be generated using recombinant engineering techniques or synthetic chemistry techniques. Screening the members of the library can be accomplished by measuring a signal related to cleavage, such as fluorescence energy transfer, after contacting the cleavage enzyme with each of the library members of the tandem fluorescent protein construct. A degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer that is lower than an expected amount indicates the presence of a linker sequence that can be cleaved by the enzyme. The degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the sample can be determined as a function of the amount of fluorescence from the donor moiety, the amount of fluorescence from the acceptor donor moiety, or the ratio of the amount of fluorescence from the donor moiety to the amount of fluorescence from the acceptor moiety or the excitation state lifetime of the donor moiety.

Libraries of fluorescent proteins can be expressed in cells and used to characterize the recognition motif of proteases expressed within cells, where the enzyme is in its native context. This method provides the additional advantage of assessing the specificity of any given linker sequence to cleavage by other enzymes other than the target enzyme. The methods consist of the generation of a library of recombinant host cells, each of which expresses a tandem fluorescent protein construct linked through a randomized candidate linker substrate. Each cell is expanded into a clonal population that is genetically homogeneous and the degree of energy transfer is

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measured from each clonal population. Optionally, FRETS can be
measured before and at least one specified time after a known
change in intracellular protease activity. A change in the
degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer demonstrates
5   that the cell contains a tandem construct and linker sequence
that can be cleaved by the enzyme activity in the cell. Such
methods are particular suited to
Fluorescent Activated Cell Sorter (FACS) clonal selection.

10   **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**
              FIG. 1 depicts the nucleotide sequence and deduced
       amino acid sequence of a wild-type *Aequorea* green fluorescent
       protein.
              FIG. 2 depicts a tandem construct of the invention
15   involved in FRET.
              FIG. 3 depicts fluorescence emission spectra of a
       composition containing a tandem S65C -- linker -- P4-3
       fluorescent protein construct excited at 368 nm after exposure
       to trypsin for 0, 2, 5, 10 and 47 minutes.
20   **FIG. 4** depicts fluorescence emission spectra intensity
       of a composition containing a tandem S65C -- linker -- P4-3
       fluorescent protein construct excited at 368 nm after exposure
       to calpain for 0, 2, 6 and 15 minutes.
              FIG. 5 depicts fluorescence emission spectra of a
25   composition containing a tandem S65C -- linker -- P4 fluorescent
       protein construct excited at 368 nm after exposure to
       enterokinase for 0, 2, 20 and 144 minutes.
              FIG. 6 depicts fluorescence emission spectra of a
       composition containing a tandem S65T -- linker -- W7 fluorescent
30   protein construct excited at 432 nm before and after exposure to
       trypsin.
              FIG. 7 depicts fluorescence emission spectra of a
       composition containing a tandem P4-3 -- linker -- W7 fluorescent
       protein construct excited at 368 nm before and after exposure to

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trypsin.

FIG. 8 depicts fluorescence emission spectra of a composition containing a tandem W1B -- linker -- 10c fluorescent protein construct excited at 433 nm before and after exposure to trypsin.

FIG. 9 depicts the time course of fluorescent ratio changes upon cleavage of a composition containing the tandem W1B -- linker -- 10c fluorescent protein construct measured at different protein concentrations after exposure to trypsin measured in a fluorescent 96 well plate reader.

FIG. 10 depicts a method of generating fluorescent tandem constructs separated by a randomized linker region for use in identifying cleavage specificities or orphan proteases.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION
DEFINITIONS

Unless defined otherwise, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art to which this invention belongs. Generally, the nomenclature used herein and the laboratory procedures in cell culture, molecular genetics, and nucleic acid chemistry and hybridization described below are those well known and commonly employed in the art. Standard techniques are used for recombinant nucleic acid methods, polynucleotide synthesis, and microbial culture and transformation (e.g., electroporation, lipofection). Generally, enzymatic reactions and purification steps are performed according to the manufacturer's specifications. The techniques and procedures are generally performed according to conventional methods in the art and various general references (see generally, Sambrook et al. Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual, 2d ed. (1989) Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y., which is incorporated herein by reference)

which are provided throughout this document. The nomenclature
used herein and the laboratory procedures in analytical
chemistry, organic synthetic chemistry, and pharmaceutical
formulation described below are those well known and commonly
5   employed in the art. Standard techniques are used for chemical
syntheses, chemical analyses, pharmaceutical formulation and
delivery, and treatment of patients. As employed throughout the
disclosure, the following terms, unless otherwise indicated,
shall be understood to have the following meanings:
10   "Moiety" refers to the radical of a molecule that is
attached to another moiety. Thus, a "fluorescent protein moiety"
is the radical of a fluorescent protein coupled to the linker
moiety. By the same token, the term "linker moiety" refers to
the radical of a molecular linker that is coupled to both the
15   donor and acceptor protein moieties.

        "Fluorescent protein" refers to any protein capable of
fluorescence when excited with appropriate electromagnetic
radiation. This includes fluorescent proteins whose amino acid
sequences are either natural or engineered.
20   "Peptide" refers to a polymer in which the monomers
are amino acids and are joined together through amide bonds,
alternatively referred to as a polypeptide. When the amino
acids are a-amino acids, either the L-optical isomer or the
D-optical isomer may be used. Additionally, unnatural amino
25   acids, for example, b-alanine, phenylglycine and homoarginine
are also meant to be included. Commonly encountered amino acids
which are not gene-encoded may also be used in the present
invention. All of the amino acids used in the present invention
may be either the D- or L-isomer. The L-isomers are preferred.
30   In addition, other peptidomimetics are also useful in the linker
moieties of the present invention. For a general review see
Spatola, A.F., in *Chemistry and Biochemistry of Amino Acids,
Peptides and Proteins*, B. Weinstein, eds., Marcel Dekker, New
York, p. 267 (1983).

"Naturally-occurring" as used herein, as applied to an object, refers to the fact that an object can be found in nature. For example, a polypeptide or polynucleotide sequence that is present in an organism (including viruses) that can be isolated from a source in nature and which has not been intentionally modified by man in the laboratory is naturally-occurring.

"Operably linked" refers to a juxtaposition wherein the components so described are in a relationship permitting them to function in their intended manner. A control sequence "operably linked" to a coding sequence is ligated in such a way that expression of the coding sequence is achieved under conditions compatible with the control sequences.

"Control sequence" refers to polynucleotide sequences which are necessary to effect the expression of coding and non-coding sequences to which they are ligated. The nature of such control sequences differs depending upon the host organism; in prokaryotes, such control sequences generally include promoter, ribosomal binding site, and transcription termination sequence; in eukaryotes, generally, such control sequences include promoters and transcription termination sequence. The term "control sequences" is intended to include, at a minimum, components whose presence can influence expression, and can also include additional components whose presence is advantageous, for example, leader sequences and fusion partner sequences.

"Polynucleotide" refers to a polymeric form of nucleotides of at least 10 bases in length, either ribonucleotides or deoxynucleotides or a modified form of either type of nucleotide. The term includes single and double stranded forms of DNA.

"Modulation " refers to the capacity to either enhance or inhibit a functional property of biological activity or process (e.g., enzyme activity or receptor binding); such enhancement or inhibition may be contingent on the occurrence of a specific

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event, such as activation of a signal transduction pathway, and/or may be manifest only in particular cell types.

The term "modulator" refers to a chemical compound (naturally occurring or non-naturally occurring), such as a biological macromolecule (e.g. nucleic acid, protein, non-peptide, or organic molecule), or an extract made from biological materials such as bacteria, plants, fungi, or animal (particularly mammalian) cells or tissues. Modulators are evaluated for potential activity as inhibitors or activators (directly or indirectly) of a biological process or processes (e.g., agonist, partial antagonist, partial agonist, antagonist, antineoplastic agents, cytotoxic agents, inhibitors of neoplastic transformation or cell proliferation, cell proliferation-promoting agents, and the like) by inclusion in screening assays described herein. The activities (or activity) of a modulator may be known, unknown or partial known. Such modulators can be screened using the methods described herein.

The term "test compound" refers to a compound to be tested by one or more screening method(s) of the invention as a putative modulator. Usually, various predetermined concentrations are used for screening such as .01 uM, .1 uM, 1.0 uM, and 10.0 uM. Test compound controls can include the measurement of a signal in the absence of the test compound or comparison to a compound known to modulate the target.

INTRODUCTION

It has been discovered that fluorescent proteins having the proper emission and excitation spectra that are brought into physically close proximity with one another can exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer ("FRET"). This invention takes advantage of that discovery to provide tandem fluorescent protein constructs in which two fluorescent protein moieties capable of exhibiting FRET are coupled through a linker

to form a tandem construct. The protein moieties are chosen
such that the excitation spectrum of one of the moieties (the
acceptor moiety) overlaps with the emission spectrum of the
excited protein moiety (the donor moiety). The donor moiety is
5   excited by light of appropriate intensity within the donor's
excitation spectrum. The donor then emits the absorbed energy
as fluorescent light. The fluorescent energy it produces is
quenched by the acceptor fluorescent protein moiety. FRET can
be manifested as a reduction in the intensity of the fluorescent
10   signal from the donor, reduction in the lifetime of its excited
state, and re-emission of fluorescent light at the longer
wavelengths (lower energies) characteristic of the acceptor.
When the linker that connects the donor and acceptor moieties is
cleaved, the fluorescent proteins physically separate, and FRET
15   is diminished or eliminated. This has also been described in
U.S. patent application 08/594,575, filed January 31, 1996,
which is herein incorporated by reference.

      One can take advantage of the FRET exhibited by the
tandem fluorescent protein constructs of the invention in
20   performing enzymatic assays. An embodiment of this process is
depicted in FIG. 2. A recombinant nucleic acid encodes a single
polypeptide including a poly-histidinyl tag, a blue fluorescent
protein donor moiety, a peptide linker moiety comprising a
protease recognition site and a green fluorescent protein
25   acceptor moiety. The nucleic acid can be expressed into a
tandem fluorescent protein construct of the invention. In this
example, a tandem construct contains a blue fluorescent protein
(such as P4-3, TABLE I) as the donor moiety and a green
fluorescent protein (such as S65C, TABLE I) as the acceptor
30   moiety.

      The construct is exposed to light at, for example, 368
nm, a wavelength that is near the excitation maximum of P4-3.
This wavelength excites S65C only minimally. Upon excitation,
some portion of the energy absorbed by the blue fluorescent

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protein moiety is transferred to the acceptor moiety through
FRET. As a result of this quenching, the blue fluorescent light
emitted by the blue fluorescent protein is less bright than
would be expected if the blue fluorescent protein existed in
isolation. The acceptor moiety (S65C) may re-emit the energy at
longer wavelength, in this case, green fluorescent light.

       After cleavage of the linker moiety by an enzyme, the
blue and green fluorescent proteins physically separate and FRET
is lost. Over time, as increasing amounts of the tandem
construct are cleaved, the intensity of visible blue fluorescent
light emitted by the blue fluorescent protein increases, while
the intensity of visible green light emitted by the green
fluorescent protein as a result of FRET, decreases.

       The tandem fluorescent protein constructs of this
invention are useful as substrates to study agents or conditions
that cleave the linker. In particular, this invention
contemplates tandem constructs in which the linker is a peptide
moiety containing an amino acid sequence that is a cleavage site
for a protease of interest. The amount of the protease in a
sample is determined by contacting the sample with a tandem
fluorescent protein construct and measuring changes in
fluorescence of the donor moiety, the acceptor moiety or the
relative fluorescence of both. In one embodiment, the tandem
construct is a recombinant fusion protein produced by expression
of a nucleic acid that encodes a single polypeptide containing
the donor moiety, the peptide linker moiety and the acceptor
moiety. Fusion proteins can be used for, among other things,
monitoring the activity of a protease inside the cell that
expresses the recombinant tandem construct. The distance
between fluorescent proteins in the construct can be regulated
based on the length of the linking moiety. Therefore, tandem
constructs of this invention whose linker moieties do not
include cleavage sites also are useful as agents for studying
FRET between fluorescent proteins.

Advantages of tandem fluorescent protein constructs include the greater extinction coefficient and quantum yield of many of these proteins compared with those of the Edans fluorophore. Also, the acceptor in a tandem construct is, itself, a fluorophore rather than a non-fluorescent quencher like Dabcyl. Thus, the enzyme's substrate (i.e., the tandem construct) and products (i.e., the moieties after cleavage) are both fluorescent but with different fluorescent characteristics.

In particular, the substrate and cleavage products exhibit different ratios between the amount of light emitted by the donor and acceptor moieties. Therefore, the ratio between the two fluorescences measures the degree of conversion of substrate to products, independent of the absolute amount of either, the optical thickness of the sample, the brightness of the excitation lamp, the sensitivity of the detector, etc. Furthermore, the Aequorea-related fluorescent protein moieties tend to be protease resistant. Therefore, they are likely to survive as fluorescent moieties even after the linker moiety is cleaved.

II.   TANDEM FLUORESCENT PROTEIN CONSTRUCTS

The tandem fluorescent protein constructs of the invention usually comprise three elements: a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a linker moiety that couples the donor and acceptor moieties. The donor fluorescent protein moiety is capable of absorbing a photon and transferring energy to another fluorescent moiety. The acceptor fluorescent protein moiety is capable of absorbing energy and emitting a photon. The linker moiety connects the donor fluorescent protein moiety to the acceptor fluorescent protein moiety. In many instances the linker moiety will covalently connect the donor fluorescent protein moiety and the acceptor fluorescent protein moiety. It is desirable, as described in greater detail herein, to select a donor

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fluorescent protein moiety with an emission spectrum that
overlaps with the excitation spectrum of an acceptor fluorescent
protein moiety. In some embodiments of the invention the
overlap in emission and excitation spectra will facilitate FRET.
Such an overlap is not necessary, however, if intrinsic
fluorescence is measured instead of FRET.   Any fluorescent
protein may be used in the invention, including proteins that
have fluoresce due intramolecular rearrangements or the addition
of cofactors that promote fluorescence.

        For example, green fluorescent proteins ("GFPs") of
cnidarians, which act as their energy-transfer acceptors in
bioluminescence, can be used in the invention. A green
fluorescent protein, as used herein, is a protein that
fluoresces green light, and a blue fluorescent protein is a
protein that fluoresces blue light.   GFPs have been isolated
from the Pacific Northwest jellyfish, *Aequorea victoria*, the sea
pansy, *Renilla reniformis*, and *Phialidium gregarium*. W.W. Ward
et al., *Photochem. Photobiol.*, 35:803-808 (1982); L.D. Levine et
al., *Comp. Biochem. Physiol.*, 72B:77-85 (1982).

        A variety of *Aequorea*-related GFPs having useful
excitation and emission spectra have been engineered by
modifying the amino acid sequence of a naturally occurring GFP
from *Aequorea victoria*. (D.C. Prasher et al., *Gene*, 111:229-233
(1992); R. Heim et al., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci.*, *USA*, 91:12501-04
(1994); U.S. patent application 08/337,915, filed November 10,
1994; International application PCT/US95/14692, filed 11/10/95;
U.S. patent application 08/706,408, filed August 30, 1996.) As
used herein, a fluorescent protein is an *Aequorea*-related
fluorescent protein if any contiguous sequence of 150 amino
acids of the fluorescent protein has at least 85% sequence
identity with an amino acid sequence, either contiguous or
non-contiguous, from the wild type *Aequorea* green fluorescent
protein of SEQ ID NO:2. More preferably, a fluorescent protein
is an *Aequorea*-related fluorescent protein if any contiguous

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sequence of 200 amino acids of the fluorescent protein has at least 95% sequence identity with an amino acid sequence, either contiguous or non-contiguous, from the wild type *Aequorea* green fluorescent protein of SEQ ID NO:2. Similarly, the fluorescent protein may be related to *Renilla* or *Phialidium* wild-type fluorescent proteins using the same standards.

        Aequorea-related fluorescent proteins include, for example, wild-type (native) *Aequorea victoria* GFP, whose nucleotide (SEQ ID NO:1) and deduced amino acid (SEQ ID NO:2) sequences are presented in **FIG.** 1; and those *Aequorea*-related engineered versions described in **TABLE** I. Several of these, i.e., P4, P4-3, W7 and W2 fluoresce at a distinctly shorter wavelength than wild type.

TABLE I

Clone	Mutation(s)	Excitation max (nm)	Emission max (nm)	Extinct. Coefficient (M⁻¹cm⁻¹)	Quantum yield
Wild type	none	395 (475)	508	21,000 (7,150)	0.77
P4	Y66H	383	447	13,500	0.21
P4-3	Y66H; Y145F	381	445	14,000	0.38
W7	Y66W; N146I M153T V163A N212K	433 (453)	475 (501)	18,000 (17,100)	0.67
W2	Y66W; I123V Y145H H148R M153T V163A N212K	432 (453)	480	10,000 (9,600)	0.72
S65T	S65T	489	511	39,200	0.68
P4-1	S65T;M153A K238E	504 (396)	514	14,500 (8,600)	0.53
S65A	S65A	471	504		
S65C	S65C	479	507		
S65L	S65L	484	510		
Y66F	Y66F	360	442		
Y66W	Y66W	458	480		
10c	S65G; V68L S72A;T203Y	513	527		
W1B	F64L;S65T Y66W; N146I M153T V163A N212K	432(453)	476(503)		
Emerald	S65T; S72A N149K M153T I167T	487	508		
Sapphire	S72A; Y145F T203I	395	511		

This invention contemplates the use of other
fluorescent proteins in tandem constructs. The cloning and
expression of yellow fluorescent protein from *Vibrio fischeri*
strain Y-1 has been described by T.O. Baldwin et al.,
Biochemistry (1990) 29:5509-15. This protein requires flavins
as fluorescent co-factors. The cloning of Peridinin-chlorophyll
a binding protein from the dinoflagellate *Symbiodinium* sp. was
described by B.J. Morris et al., *Plant Molecular Biology*, (1994)
24:673:77. One useful aspect of this protein is that it
fluoresces in red. The cloning of phycobiliproteins from marine
cyanobacteria such as *Synechococcus*, e.g., phycoerythrin and
phycocyanin, is described in S.M. Wilbanks et al., *J. Biol.*
Chem. (1993) 268:1226-35. These proteins require phycobilins as
fluorescent co-factors, whose insertion into the proteins
involves auxiliary enzymes. The proteins fluoresce at yellow to
red wavelengths.

For FRET, the donor fluorescent protein moiety and the
acceptor fluorescent protein moiety are selected so that the
donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance
energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited. One factor to
be considered in choosing the fluorescent protein moiety pair is
the efficiency of fluorescence resonance energy transfer between
them. Preferably, the efficiency of FRET between the donor and
acceptor moieties is at least 10%, more preferably at least 50%
and even more preferably at least 80%. The efficiency of FRET
can easily be empirically tested using the methods described
herein and known in the art, particularly, using the conditions
set forth in the **Examples**.

The efficiency of FRET is dependent on the separation
distance and the orientation of the donor and acceptor moieties,
as described by the Forster equation, the fluorescent quantum
yield of the donor moiety and the energetic overlap with the
acceptor moiety. Forster derived the relationship:

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$$E = (F^0 - F)/F^0 = R_0^6/(R^6 + R_0^6)$$

where E is the efficiency of FRET, F and F^0 are the fluorescence intensities of the donor in the presence and absence of the acceptor, respectively, and R is the distance between the donor and the acceptor. R_0, the distance at which the energy transfer efficiency is 50%, is given (in Å) by

$$R_0 = 9.79 \times 10^3 (K^2 Q J n^{-4})^{1/6}$$

where K^2 is an orientation factor having an average value close to 0.67 for freely mobile donors and acceptors, Q is the quantum yield of the unquenched fluorescent donor, n is the refractive index of the intervening medium, and J is the overlap integral, which expresses in quantitative terms the degree of spectral overlap,

$$J = \int_0^\infty \varepsilon_\lambda F_\lambda \lambda^4 d\lambda \Big/ \int_0^\infty F_\lambda d\lambda$$

where ε_λ is the molar absorptivity of the acceptor in M^{-1} cm^{-1} and F_λ is the donor fluorescence at wavelength 1 measured in cm. Forster, T. (1948) *Ann.Physik* 2:55-75. Tables of spectral overlap integrals are readily available to those working in the field (for example, Berlman, I.B. *Energy transfer parameters of aromatic compounds*, Academic Press, New York and London (1973)).

The characteristic distance R_0 at which FRET is 50% efficient depends on the quantum yield of the donor i.e., the shorter-wavelength fluorophore, the extinction coefficient of the acceptor, i.e., the longer-wavelength fluorophore, and the overlap between the donor's emission spectrum and the acceptor's excitation spectrum. Calculated values of R_0 for P4-3 to S65T and S65C are both 4.03 nm because the slightly higher extinction coefficient of S65T compensates for its slightly longer emission wavelength. R. Heim et al., "Improved green fluorescence,"

Nature (1995) 373:663-664.

The efficiency of FRET between the two fluorescent proteins can also be adjusted by changing ability of the two fluorescent proteins to dimerize or closely associate. If the two fluorescent proteins are known or determined to closely associate, an increase or decrease in dimerization can be promoted by adjusting the length of the linker moiety between the two fluorescent proteins. Such dimerization can change Λ^2, R, J, and Q and dimerization changes directly affect the fluorescence spectra compared to undimerized protein. Consequently, for FRET aspects of the invention, the change in intrinsic fluorescence can be used to adjust the amount of FRET between the donor and the acceptor, as well as dimerization induced changes in FRET distances. Such dimerization induced changes in FRET distance can be optimized for maximal changes in FRET upon cleavage of a linker moiety by empirically determining the length of the linker moiety that produces the best FRET. Usually, such linkers will be comparable to a length of 14 to 30 amino acids.

The ability of two fluorescent proteins to dimerize could be increased by selecting amino acid positions that interact in the dimer and making changes of the amino acids at such positions that increase the hydrophobic or ionic interactions, or decrease the steric repulsions. Conversely, ability of two fluorescent proteins to dimerize could be decreased by selecting amino acid positions that interact in the dimer and making changes in the amino acids at such positions that decrease the hydrophobic or ionic interaction, or increase the steric repulsions. Thus, intramolecular interactions responsible for the association of fluorescent protein moieties in a tandem fluorescent protein or intermolecular interactions between two fluorescent proteins in free solution can be enhanced or attenuated.

For example, Aequorea derived fluorescent proteins and

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related proteins, especially at high concentrations of free
protein, exist as dimers. The dimerization domain can be
identified in the wild type protein using the crystal structure.
Yang,F., et al The Molecular structure of Green Fluorescent

5   Protein. Nature. Biotech. (1996) 14 1246-1251. In the case
of wildtype GFP, the hydrophobic amino acids, Ala 206, Leu 221,
and Phe 223 interact during dimerization. The tendency of a
tandem GFP (or two GFPs in free solution)to non-covalently
associate at these positions could be increased by increasing

10 the hydrophobicity of amino acids at positions 206 or 221,
thereby increasing the strength of hydrophobic interactions
between the two fluorescent proteins:

For example, replacement of Ala 206, or Leu 221 by any of
the amino acids, Val, Ile or Phe would increase their

15 hydrophobicity, and potentially strengthen the hydrophobic
interaction between two GFPs. Alternatively, the amino acids
could be changed to positively charged amino acids in one
fluorescent protein (for example lys or Arg) and to negatively
charged amino acids in the second fluorescent protein of the

20 construct (for example Glu or Asp) thereby creating additional
electrostatic interactions between two GFPs. Similarly the
amino acids Tyr 39, Glu 142, Asn 144, Asn 146, Ser 147, Asn 149,
Tyr 151, Arg 168, Asn 170, Glu 172, Tyr 200, Ser 202, Gln 204
and Ser 208 could be changed according to the methods described

25 herein to enhance intramolecular interactions between tandem
fluorescent proteins or intermolecular interactions between to
GFPs in free solution.

The length of the linker moiety is chosen to optimize
both FRET and the kinetics and specificity of enzymatic

30 cleavage. The average distance between the donor and acceptor
moieties should be between about 1 nm and about 10 nm,
preferably between about 1 nm and about 6 nm, and more
preferably between about 1 nm and about 4 nm. If the linker is
too short, the protein moieties may sterically interfere with

each other's folding or with the ability of the cleavage enzyme to attack the linker. In embodiments of the invention where dimerization is desired the linker length will typically be a length comparable the length of at least 12 amino acids, preferably at least 18 amino acids and more preferably at least 24 amino acids. Only in rare instances will the linker length be longer than the length of about 40 to 50 amino acids. However, embodiments of the invention comprise linker moieties having 150 to 200 amino acids.

The effect of linker length on the ability of tandemly linked fluorescent proteins to become fluorescent was determined for a modified GFP tandem protein, as shown in **TABLE II**. The modified GFP tandem protein was expressed in bacteria and grown at 37(C.

TABLE II

Linker Length in amino acids	Fluorescence of 1st Fluorescent protein (Sapphire)	Fluorescence of 2nd Fluorescent protein (10C)
12	6.8×10^4	6.2×10^4
14	8.9×10^4	8.4×10^4
16	1.1×10^5	1.0×10^5
18	1.3×10^5	1.2×10^5
20	1.5×10^5	1.4×10^5
22	2.9×10^6	1.6×10^4
24	1.1×10^6	7.8×10^4
25	2.0×10^6	1.2×10^6

Tandem fluorescent proteins of the invention comprising the general form Sapphire - linker - 10C (10C is also known as Topaz) were expressed in the bacterial cells JM109 (DE3). The linker moiety was constructed with variable numbers of amino acids to evaluate the influence of linker size on fluorescence development. The linker sequences of **TABLE II** are described as SEQ ID NO.: 26 to 31, respectively. The composition of the 25 amino acid linker is identical to that used in the tandem fluorescent protein constructs in the Examples. After overnight growth at 37(C the bacterial colonies were examined to determine

their relative fluorescence by resuspension in PBS after normalization for the number of bacteria present by measuring the optical density at 600 nm.

When the intramolecular dimerization of a tandem fluorescent protein construct is preferred, the three dimensional structure and flexability of the linker shouldpermit the fluorescent protein moieties to associate. When the linker moiety contains a cleavage site, the length of the linker can be between about 5 and about 50 amino acids and more preferably between about 12 and 30 amino acids. Longer linkers may create too many sites which are vulnerable to attack by enzymes other than the one being assayed.

To optimize the efficiency and detectability of FRET within the tandem fluorescent protein construct, several factors need to be balanced. The emission spectrum of the donor moiety should overlap as much as possible with the excitation spectrum of the acceptor moiety to maximize the overlap integral J. Also, the quantum yield of the donor moiety and the extinction coefficient of the acceptor should likewise be as high as possible to maximize R_0. However, the excitation spectra of the donor and acceptor moieties should overlap as little as possible so that a wavelength region can be found at which the donor can be excited efficiently without directly exciting the acceptor. Fluorescence arising from direct excitation of the acceptor is difficult to distinguish from fluorescence arising from FRET. Similarly, the emission spectra of the donor and acceptor moieties should overlap as little as possible so that the two emissions can be clearly distinguished. High fluorescence quantum yield of the acceptor moiety is desirable if the emission from the acceptor is to be measured either as the sole readout or as part of an emission ratio. In a preferred embodiment, the donor moiety is excited by ultraviolet (<400 nm) and emits blue light (<500 nm), whereas the acceptor is efficiently excited by blue but not by ultraviolet light and

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emits green light (>500 nm), for example, P4-3 and S65C.

In the tandem constructs of the invention, the donor and acceptor moieties are connected through a linker moiety. The linker moiety is, preferably, a peptide moiety, but can be another organic molecular moiety, as well. In a preferred embodiment, the linker moiety includes a cleavage recognition site specific for an enzyme or other cleavage agent of interest. A cleavage site in the linker moiety is useful because when a tandem construct is mixed with the cleavage agent, the linker is a substrate for cleavage by the cleavage agent. Rupture of the linker moiety results in separation of the fluorescent protein moieties that is measurable as a change in FRET.

When the cleavage agent of interest is a protease, the linker can comprise a peptide containing a cleavage recognition sequence for the protease. A cleavage recognition sequence for a protease is a specific amino acid sequence recognized by the protease during proteolytic cleavage. In particular, the linker can contain any of the amino acid sequences in **TABLE III**. The sites are recognized by the enzymes as indicated and the site of cleavage is marked by a hyphen. Other protease cleavage sites also are known in the art and can be included in the linker moiety.

TABLE III

Protease	Sequence
HIV-1 protease	SQNY-PIVQ (SEQ ID NO:3)
	KARVL-AEAMS (SEQ ID NO:4)
Prohormone convertase	PSPREGKR-SY (SEQ ID NO:5)
Interleukin-1b-converting enzyme	YVAD-G (SEQ ID NO:6)
Adenovirus endopeptidase	MFGG-AKKR (SEQ ID NO:7)
Cytomegalovirus assemblin	GVVNA-SSRLA (SEQ ID NO:8)
Leishmanolysin	LIAY-LKKAT (SEQ ID NO:9)
b-Secretase for amyloid precursor protein	VKM-DAEF (SEQ ID NO:10)
Thrombin	FLAEGGGVR-GPRVVERH (SEQ ID NO:11)
Renin and angiotensin-converting enzyme	DRVYIHPF-HL-VIH (SEQ ID NO:12)
Cathepsin D	KPALF-FRL (SEQ ID NO:13)
Kininogenases including kallikrein	QPLGQTSLMK-RPPGFSPFR-SVQVMKT QEGS (SEQ ID NO:14)

See, e.g., Matayoshi et al. (1990) *Science* 247:954, Dunn et al. (1994) *Meth. Enzymol.* 241:254, Seidah & Chretien (1994) *Meth. Enzymol.* 244:175, Thornberry (1994) Meth. Enzymol. 244:615, Weber & Tihanyi (1994) *Meth. Enzymol.* 244:595, Smith et al. (1994) *Meth. Enzymol.* 244:412, Bouvier et al. (1995) *Meth. Enzymol.* 248:614, Hardy et al. (1994) in <u>Amyloid Protein Precursor in Development, Aging, and Alzheimer's Disease</u>, ed. C.L. Masters et al. pp. 190-198.

In the case of a known protease with cleavage activity of unknown or partially defined specificity, a library of randomized linker sequences can be used in place of a predetermined linker sequence in the tandem fluorescent protein construct in order to determine the sequences cleaved by a protease. The method can be used with a recombinant protease constructed with a novel cleavage specificity. This method can also be used to determine the specificity of cleavage of an orphan protein that reveals sequence homology to a known protease structure or group of proteases.

In one embodiment, a genetically engineered library of tandem fluorescent protein constructs having randomized linkers can be used to define the function of an orphan protease. Optionally, the orphan protease, especially to if is thought to be expressed relatively inactive precursor, can be coexpressed with the tandem fluorescent protein construct. The protease may also be coexpressed with the tandem construct and under the control of an inducable promoter.

As used herein, a "library" refers to a collection containing at least 5 different members, preferably at least 100 different members and more preferably at least 200 different members. Each member of a tandem fluorescent substrate library comprises 2 tandemly linked fluorescent protein moieties separated by a peptide linker moiety of variable amino acid composition. The amino acid sequences for the peptide linker moiety may be completely random or biased towards a particular sequence based on the homology between other proteases and the protease being tested.. The library can be chemically synthesized, which is particularly desirable if d-amino acids are to be included. In most instances, however, the library will be expressed in bacteria or a mammalian cell.

For example, the library can contain linkers with a diverse collection of amino acids in which most or all of the amino acid positions are randomized. Alternatively, the library can contain

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variable peptide moieties in which only a few, e.g., one to ten, amino acid positions are varied, but in which the probability of substitution is very high.

Preferably, libraries of tandem fluorescent protein candidate substrates are created by expressing protein from libraries of recombinant nucleic acid molecules having expression control sequences operatively linked to nucleic acid sequences that code for the expression of different fluorescent protein candidate substrates. Methods of making nucleic acid molecules encoding a diverse collection of peptides are described in, for example, U.S. patent 5,432,018 (Dower et al.), U.S. patent 5,223,409 (Ladner et al.) and International patent publication WO 92/06176 (Huse et al.).

For expression of tandem fluorescent protein candidate substrates, recombinant nucleic acid molecules are used to transfect cells, such that a cell contains a member of the library. This produces, in turn, a library of host cells capable of expressing a library of different fluorescent protein candidate substrates. The library of host cells is useful in the screening methods of this invention.

In one method of creating such a library, a diverse collection of oligonucleotides having random codon sequences are combined to create polynucleotides encoding peptides having a desired number of amino acids for the lnker moiety. The oligonucleotides preferably are prepared by chemical synthesis. The polynucleotides encoding peptide linker moiety of variable composition can then be ligated to the 5' or 3' end of a nucleic acid encoding one of the tandem fluorescent protein moieties, using methods known in the art. This creates a recombinant nucleic acid molecule coding for the expression of a fluorescent protein candidate substrate having a variable linker peptide moiety fused to the amino or carboxy- terminus of one of the tandem fluorescent proteins. This recombinant nucleic acid molecule is then inserted into an expression vector in which the

second fluorescent has already been inserted to create a
recombinant nucleic acid molecule comprising expression control
sequences operatively linked to the sequences encoding the
tandemly repeated fluorescent proteins separated by the linker
moieties (FIG. 10).

To generate the collection of oligonucleotides which forms
a series of codons encoding a random collection of amino acids
that is ultimately cloned into the vector, a codon motif is
used, such as (NNK)$_x$, where N may be A, C, G, or T (nominally
equimolar), K is G or T (nominally equimolar), and x is the
desired number of amino acids in the peptide moiety, e.g., 15 to
produce a library of 15-mer peptides. The third position may
also be G or C, designated "S". Thus, NNK or NNS (i) code for
all the amino acids, (ii) code for only one stop codon, and
(iii) reduce the range of codon bias from 6:1 to 3:1. The
expression of peptides from randomly generated mixtures of
oligonucleotides in appropriate recombinant vectors is discussed
in Oliphant et al., Gene 44:177-183 (1986), incorporated herein
by reference.

An exemplified codon motif (NNK)$_6$ produces 32 codons, one
for each of 12 amino acids, two for each of five amino acids,
three for each of three amino acids and one (amber) stop codon.
Although this motif produces a codon distribution as equitable
as available with standard methods of oligonucleotide synthesis,
it results in a bias for amino acids encoded by two or three
alternative codons.

An alternative approach to minimize the bias against
one-codon residues involves the synthesis of 20 activated
tri-nucleotides, each representing the codon for one of the 20
genetically encoded amino acids. These are synthesized by
conventional means, removed from the support but maintaining the
base and 5-HO-protecting groups, and activating by the addition
of 3'O-phosphoramidite (and phosphate protection with
beta-cyanoethyl groups) by the method used for the activation of

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mononucleosides, as generally described in McBride and
Caruthers, *Tetrahedron Letters* 22:245 (1983). Degenerate
"oligocodons" are prepared using these trimers as building
blocks. The trimers are mixed at the desired molar ratios and
installed in the synthesizer. The ratios will usually be
approximately equimolar, but may be a controlled unequal ratio
to obtain the over- to under-representation of certain amino
acids coded for by the degenerate oligonucleotide collection.
The condensation of the trimers to form the oligocodons is done
essentially as described for conventional synthesis employing
activated mononucleosides as building blocks. See generally,
Atkinson and Smith, *Oligonucleotide Synthesis*, M.J. Gait, ed.
p35-82 (1984). Thus, this procedure generates a population of
oligonucleotides for cloning that is capable of encoding an
equal distribution (or a controlled unequal distribution) of the
possible peptide sequences.

Because protease cleavage recognition sequences generally
are only a few amino acids in length, the linker moiety can
include the recognition sequence within flexible spacer amino
acid sequences, such as GGGGS (SEQ ID NO:15). For example, a
linker moiety including a cleavage recognition sequence for
Adenovirus endopeptidase could have the sequence GGGGGGSMFG
GAKKRSGGGG GG (SEQ ID NO:16).

Alternatively, the linker moiety can be an organic
molecular moiety that can contain a cleavage site for an enzyme
that is not a protease. The molecular structure is selected so
that the distance between the fluorescent moieties allows FRET
(i.e., less than about 10 nm). For example, the linker moiety
can contain a structure that is recognized by b-lactamase,
rendering the tandem complex a substrate for this enzyme. One
structure for such a linker moiety is:
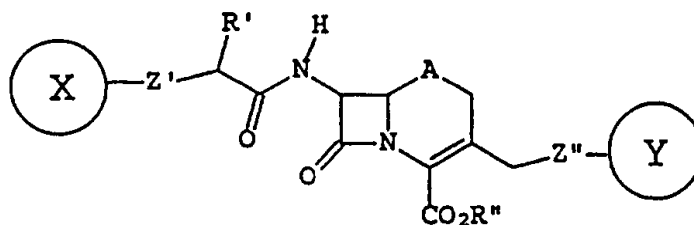
in which one of X and Y is the donor moiety and the other is the
acceptor moiety. R' can be, for example, H, lower alkyl or
lower alkoxy of up to 15 carbon. R" can be H,
physiologically-acceptable metal and ammonium cations, alkyl,

5   alkoxy or aromatic groups of up to 15 carbon atoms. (See, e.g.,
Bundgaard, H., *Design of prodrugs*, Elsevier Science publishers
(1985); *Bioreversible Carriers in Drug Design*, New York:Pergamon
Press (1987); Ferres, H. (1980) *Chem. Ind.* June:435-440.) Z'
and Z" are parts of the linker moiety having fewer than about 20

10   carbon atoms. Z" includes a heteroatom, such as oxygen or,
preferably, sulfur, attached to the cephalosporin side chain to
act as a nucleofuge. Such linker moieties also are described in
United States patent application 08/407,547, filed March 20,
1995.

15   This invention contemplates tandem fluorescent protein
constructs produced in the form of a fusion protein by
recombinant DNA technology as well as constructs produced by
chemically coupling fluorescent proteins to a linker. In either
case, the fluorescent proteins for use as donor or acceptor

20   moieties in a tandem construct of the invention preferably are
produced recombinantly.

       Recombinant production of fluorescent proteins involves
expressing nucleic acids having sequences that encode the
proteins. Nucleic acids encoding fluorescent proteins can be

25   obtained by methods known in the art. For example, a nucleic

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acid encoding the protein can be isolated by polymerase chain
reaction of cDNA from *A. victoria* using primers based on the DNA
sequence of *A. victoria* green fluorescent protein, as presented
in FIG. 1. PCR methods are described in, for example, U.S. Pat.
No. 4,683,195; Mullis et al. (1987) *Cold Spring Harbor Symp.
Quant. Biol.* 51:263; and Erlich, ed., *PCR Technology*, (Stockton
Press, NY, 1989). Mutant versions of fluorescent proteins can
be made by site-specific mutagenesis of other nucleic acids
encoding fluorescent proteins, or by random mutagenesis caused
by increasing the error rate of PCR of the original
polynucleotide with 0.1 mM $MnCl_2$ and unbalanced nucleotide
concentrations. See, e.g., U.S. patent application 08/337,915,
filed November 10, 1994 or International application
PCT/US95/14692, filed 11/10/95.

The construction of expression vectors and the expression
of genes in transfected cells involves the use of molecular
cloning techniques also well known in the art. Sambrook et al.,
Molecular Cloning -- A Laboratory Manual, Cold Spring Harbor
Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, NY, (1989) and *Current Protocols
in Molecular Biology*, F.M. Ausubel et al., eds., (Current
Protocols, a joint venture between Greene Publishing Associates,
Inc. and John Wiley & Sons, Inc., (most recent Supplement).

Nucleic acids used to transfect cells with sequences coding
for expression of the polypeptide of interest generally will be
in the form of an expression vector including expression control
sequences operatively linked to a nucleotide sequence coding for
expression of the polypeptide. As used, the term "nucleotide
sequence coding for expression of" a polypeptide refers to a
sequence that, upon transcription and translation of mRNA,
produces the polypeptide. This can include sequences
containing, e.g., introns. As used herein, the term "expression
control sequences" refers to nucleic acid sequences that
regulate the expression of a nucleic acid sequence to which it
is operatively linked. Expression control sequences are

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"operatively linked" to a nucleic acid sequence when the
expression control sequences control and regulate the
transcription and, as appropriate, translation of the nucleic
acid sequence. Thus, expression control sequences can include
appropriate promoters, enhancers, transcription terminators, a
start codon (i.e., ATG) in front of a protein-encoding gene,
splicing signals for introns, maintenance of the correct reading
frame of that gene to permit proper translation of the mRNA, and
stop codons.

Recombinant fluorescent protein can be produced by
expression of nucleic acid encoding the protein in *E. coli*. The
fluorophore of *Aequorea*-related fluorescent proteins results
from cyclization and oxidation of residues 65-67.
Aequorea-related fluorescent proteins are best expressed by
cells cultured between about 20˚ C and 30˚ C. After synthesis,
these enzymes are stable at higher temperatures (e.g., 37˚ C)
and can be used in assays at those temperatures.

The construct can also contain a tag to simplify isolation
of the tandem construct. For example, a polyhistidine tag of,
e.g., six histidine residues, can be incorporated at the amino
terminal end of the fluorescent protein. The polyhistidine tag
allows convenient isolation of the protein in a single step by
nickel-chelate chromatography.

A.   <u>Recombinant Nucleic Acids Encoding Tandem Construct</u>
       <u>Fusion Proteins</u>

In a preferred embodiment, the tandem construct is a fusion
protein produced by recombinant DNA technology in which a single
polypeptide includes a donor moiety, a peptide linker moiety and
an acceptor moiety. The donor moiety can be positioned at the
amino-terminus relative to the acceptor moiety in the
polypeptide. Such a fusion protein has the generalized
structure: (amino terminus) donor fluorescent protein moiety --
peptide linker moiety -- acceptor fluorescent protein moiety

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(carboxy terminus). Alternatively, the donor moiety can be positioned at the carboxy-terminus relative to the acceptor moiety within the fusion protein. Such a fusion protein has the generalized structure: (amino terminus) acceptor fluorescent protein moiety -- peptide linker moiety -- donor fluorescent protein moiety (carboxy terminus). The invention also envisions fusion proteins that contain extra amino acid sequences at the amino and/or carboxy termini, for example, polyhistidine tags.

Thus, tandem constructs encoded by a recombinant nucleic acid include sequences coding for expression of a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a peptide linker moiety. The elements are selected so that upon expression into a fusion protein, the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit FRET when the donor moiety is excited.

The recombinant nucleic acid can be incorporated into an expression vector comprising expression control sequences operatively linked to the recombinant nucleic acid. The expression vector can be adapted for function in prokaryotes or eukaryotes by inclusion of appropriate promoters, replication sequences, markers, etc.

The expression vector can be transfected into a host cell for expression of the recombinant nucleic acid. Host cells can be selected for high levels of expression in order to purify the tandem construct fusion protein. *E. coli* is useful for this purpose. Alternatively, the host cell can be a prokaryotic or eukaryotic cell selected to study the activity of an enzyme produced by the cell. In this case, the linker peptide is selected to include an amino acid sequence recognized by the protease. The cell can be, e.g., a cultured cell or a cell *in vivo*.

A primary advantage of tandem construct fusion proteins is that they are prepared by normal protein biosynthesis, thus completely avoiding organic synthesis and the requirement for customized unnatural amino acid analogs. The constructs can be

expressed in *E. coli* in large scale for *in vitro* assays.
Purification from bacteria is simplified when the sequences
include polyhistidine tags for one-step purification by
nickel-chelate chromatography. Alternatively, the substrates
can be expressed directly in a desired host cell for assays *in
situ*, which is particularly advantageous if the proteases of
interest are membrane-bound or regulated in a complex fashion or
not yet abundant as purified stable enzymes. No other
generalizable method for continuous nondestructive assay of
protease activity in living cells or organisms presently exists.

B.   Non-Recombinant Coupling Methods

Fluorescent proteins can be attached through
non-recombinant means. In one embodiment, the moieties are
attached to a linker by chemical means. This is preferred if
the linker moiety is not a peptide. In this case, the linker
moiety can comprise a cross-linker moiety. A number of
cross-linkers are well known in the art, including homo- or
hetero-bifunctional cross-linkers, such as BMH, SPDP, etc. In
general, the linker should have a length so as to separate the
moieties by about 10 Å to about 100 Å. This is more critical
than the particular chemical composition of the linker.
Chemical methods for specifically linking molecules to the
amino- or carboxy-terminus of a protein are reviewed by R.E.
Offord, "Chemical Approaches to Protein Engineering," in *Protein
Engineering -- A Practical Approach*, (1992) A.R. Rees, M.
Sternberg and R. Wetzel, eds., Oxford University Press.

When the protein moieties are to be chemically coupled,
fluorescent proteins can be isolated from natural sources by
means known in the art. One method involves purifying the
proteins to electrophoretic homogeneity. Also, J.R. Deschamps
et al. describe a method of purifying recombinant *Aequorea* GFP
in *Protein Expression and Purification*, (1995) 6:555-558.

In another embodiment, the moieties are coupled by

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attaching each to a nucleic acid molecule. The nucleic acids
have sequences of sufficient length and areas of sufficient
complementarity to allow hybridization between them, thereby
linking the moieties through hydrogen bonds. When the linker
5   contains the sequence of a restriction site, this embodiment
allows one to assay for the presence of restriction enzymes by
monitoring FRET after the nucleic acid is cleaved and the
moieties physically separate.

       In another embodiment, the moieties are coupled by
10   attaching each to a polypeptide pair capable of bonding through
dimerization. For example, the peptide can include sequences
that form a leucine zipper, shown to enable dimerization of a
protein to which it was attached. See A. Blondel et al.,
"Engineering the quaternary structure of an exported protein
15   with a leucine zipper," *Protein Engineering* (1991) 4:457-461.
The linker containing the leucine zipper in the Blondel et al.
article had the sequence: IQRMKQLED KVEELLSKNY HLENEVARLK KLVGER
(SEQ ID NO:17). In another embodiment, a peptide linker moiety
can comprise the sequence SKVILF (SEQ OID NO:18), which also is
20   capable of dimerization. See WO 94/28173.

       C.   Alternative Fluorescent Protein Constructs
             This invention also contemplates tandem constructs
possessing a single fluorescent protein moiety that functions as
donor or acceptor and a non-protein compound fluorescent moiety
25   that functions as donor or quencher. In one embodiment, the
construct comprises a donor fluorescent protein moiety, a
non-protein compound acceptor fluorescent moiety and a linker
moiety that couples the donor and acceptor moieties.
Alternatively, a tandem construct can comprise a non-protein
30   compound donor fluorescent moiety, an acceptor fluorescent
protein moiety and a linker moiety that couples the donor and
acceptor moieties. Non-protein compound fluorescent donor
moieties of particular interest include coumarins and
fluoresceins; particular quenchers of interest include

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fluoresceins, rhodols, rhodamines and azo dyes. Acceptable
fluorescent dyes are described, for example, in U.S. application
08/407,544, filed 3/20/95. The donor and acceptor moieties of
these constructs are chosen with many of the same considerations
for FRET as for tandem fluorescent protein constructs having two
fluorescent protein moieties.

III. ENZYMATIC ASSAYS USING TANDEM FLUORESCENT PROTEIN
      CONSTRUCTS

        Tandem fluorescent protein constructs are useful in
enzymatic assays. These assays take advantage of the fact that
cleavage of the linker moiety and separation of the fluorescent
moieties results in a measurable change in FRET. Methods for
determining whether a sample has activity of an enzyme involve
contacting the sample with a tandem fluorescent protein
construct in which the linker moiety that couples the donor and
acceptor moieties contains a cleavage recognition site specific
for the enzyme. Then the donor moiety is excited with light in
its excitation spectrum. If the linker moiety is cleaved, the
donor and acceptor are free to drift apart, increasing the
distance between the donor and acceptor and preventing FRET.
Then, the degree of FRET in the sample is determined. A degree
of FRET that is lower than the amount expected in a sample in
which the tandem construct is not cleaved indicates that the
enzyme is present.
        The amount of activity of an enzyme in a sample can be
determined by determining the degree of FRET in the sample at a
first and second time after contact between the sample and the
tandem construct, determining the difference in the degree of
FRET. The amount of enzyme in the sample can be calculated as a
function of the difference in the degree of FRET using
appropriate standards. The faster or larger the loss of FRET,
the more enzyme activity must have been present in the sample.
        The degree of FRET can be determined by any spectral

or fluorescence lifetime characteristic of the excited construct, for example, by determining the intensity of the fluorescent signal from the donor, the intensity of fluorescent signal from the acceptor, the ratio of the fluorescence amplitudes near the acceptor's emission maxima to the fluorescence amplitudes near the donor's emission maximum, or the excited state lifetime of the donor.

For example, cleavage of the linker increases the intensity of fluorescence from the donor, decreases the intensity of fluorescence from the acceptor, decreases the ratio of fluorescence amplitudes from the acceptor to that from the donor, and increases the excited state lifetime of the donor.

Preferably, changes in the degree of FRET are determined as a function of the change in the ratio of the amount of fluorescence from the donor and acceptor moieties, a process referred to as "ratioing." Changes in the absolute amount of substrate, excitation intensity, and turbidity or other background absorbances in the sample at the excitation wavelength affect the intensities of fluorescence from both the donor and acceptor approximately in parallel. Therefore the ratio of the two emission intensities is a more robust and preferred measure of cleavage than either intensity alone.

The excitation state lifetime of the donor moiety is, likewise, independent of the absolute amount of substrate, excitation intensity, or turbidity or other background absorbances. Its measurement requires equipment with nanosecond time resolution.

Fluorescence in a sample is measured using a fluorimeter. In general, excitation radiation, from an excitation source having a first wavelength, passes through excitation optics. The excitation optics cause the excitation radiation to excite the sample. In response, fluorescent proteins in the sample emit radiation which has a wavelength that is different from the excitation wavelength. Collection

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optics then collect the emission from the sample. The device
can include a temperature controller to maintain the sample at a
specific temperature while it is being scanned. According to
one embodiment, a multi-axis translation stage moves a
5   microtiter plate holding a plurality of samples in order to
position different wells to be exposed. The multi-axis
translation stage, temperature controller, auto-focusing
feature, and electronics associated with imaging and data
collection can be managed by an appropriately programmed digital
10   computer. The computer also can transform the data collected
during the assay into another format for presentation.

Methods of performing assays on fluorescent materials
are well known in the art and are described in, e.g., Lakowicz,
J.R., *Principles of Fluorescence Spectroscopy*, New York:Plenum
15   Press (1983); Herman, B., Resonance energy transfer microscopy,
in: *Fluorescence Microscopy of Living Cells in Culture, Part B,
Methods in Cell Biology*, vol. 30, ed. Taylor, D.L. & Wang,
Y.-L., San Diego: Academic Press (1989), pp. 219-243; Turro,
N.J., *Modern Molecular Photochemistry*, Menlo Park:
20   Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Col, Inc. (1978), pp. 296-361.

Enzymatic assays also can be performed on living cells
in vivo, or from samples derived from organisms transfected to
express the tandem construct. Because tandem construct fusion
proteins can be expressed recombinantly inside a cell, the
25   amount of enzyme activity in the cell or organism of which it is
a part can be determined by determining changes in fluorescence
of cells or samples from the organism.

In one embodiment, a cell is transiently or stably
transfected with an expression vector encoding a tandem
30   fluorescent protein construct containing a linker moiety that is
specifically cleaved by the enzyme to be assayed. This
expression vector optionally includes controlling nucleotide
sequences such as promotor or enhancing elements. The enzyme to
be assayed may either be intrinsic to the cell or may be

introduced by stable transfection or transient co-transfection with another expression vector encoding the enzyme and optionally including controlling nucleotide sequences such as promoter or enhancer elements. The fluorescent protein construct and the enzyme preferably are expressed in the same cellular compartment so that they have more opportunity to come into contact.

If the cell does not possess enzyme activity, the efficiency of FRET in the cell is high, and the fluorescence characteristics of the cell reflect this efficiency. If the cell possesses a high degree of enzyme activity, most of the tandem construct expressed by the cell will be cleaved. In this case, the efficiency of FRET is low, reflecting a large amount or high efficiency of the cleavage enzyme relative to the rate of synthesis of the tandem fluorescent protein construct. If the level of enzyme activity in the cell is such that an equilibrium is reached between expression and cleavage of the tandem construct, the fluorescence characteristics will reflect this equilibrium level. In one aspect, this method can be used to compare mutant cells to identify which ones possess greater or less enzymatic activity. Such cells can be sorted by a fluorescent cell sorter based on fluorescence.

A contemplated variation of the above assay is to use the controlling nucleotide sequences to produce a sudden increase in the expression of either the tandem fluorescent protein construct or the enzyme being assayed, e.g., by inducing expression of the construct. The efficiency of FRET is monitored at one or more time intervals after the onset of increased expression. A low efficiency or rapid decline of FRET reflects a large amount or high efficiency of the cleavage enzyme. This kinetic determination has the advantage of minimizing any dependency of the assay on the rates of degradation or loss of the fluorescent protein moieties.

Libraries of host cells expressing tandem fluorescent

protein candidate substrates are useful in identifying linker
sequences that can be cleaved by a target protease. In general,
one begins with a library of recombinant host cells, each of
which expresses a different fluorescent protein candidate

5   substrate. Each cell is expanded into a clonal population that
is genetically homogeneous. The method consists of measuring
FRET from each clonal population before and at least one
specified time after a known change in intracellular protease
activity. This could be achieved using a fluorimeter, a 96 well

10   plate reader, or by FACS (fluorescence Activated Cell Sorting)
anlysis and sorting. This change in protease activity could be
produced by transfection with a gene encoding the protease, or
infection of a cell by a virus, or induction of protease gene
expression using expression control elements, or by any

15   condition that post-translationally modulates the activity of a
protease that has already been expressed. An example of the
latter is the activation of Calpain 1 by increases in
intracellular calcium. The nucleic acids from cells exhibiting a
change in FRET can be isolated for example by PCR amplification,

20   and the linker sequences that could be cleaved by the protease
identified by sequencing. The results from these studies could
used as the basis for the generation of more targeted libraries
to identify optimal cleavage motifs through repeated rounds of
analysis and selection of clones exhibiting the largest and most

25   rapid changes in FRET in the presence, but not the absence of
the protease.

         In another embodiment, the vector may be incorporated
into an entire organism by standard transgenic or gene
replacement techniques. An expression vector capable of

30   expressing the enzyme optionally may be incorporated into the
entire organism by standard transgenic or gene replacement
techniques. Then, a sample from the organism containing the
tandem construct or the cleaved moieties is tested. For
example, cell or tissue homogenates, individual cells, or

samples of body fluids, such as blood, can be tested.

The enzymatic assays of the invention can be used in drug screening assays to identify compounds that alter the activity of an enzyme. In one embodiment, the assay is performed on a sample *in vitro* containing the enzyme. A sample containing a known amount of enzyme is mixed with a tandem construct of the invention and with a test compound. The amount of the enzyme activity in the sample is then determined as above, e.g., by determining the degree of fluorescence at a first and second time after contact between the sample, the tandem construct and the compound. Then the amount of activity per mole of enzyme in the presence of the test compound is compared with the activity per mole of enzyme in the absence of the test compound. A difference indicates that the test compound alters the activity of the enzyme.

In another embodiment, the ability of a compound to alter enzyme activity *in vivo* is determined. In an *in vivo* assay, cells transfected with a expression vector encoding a tandem construct of the invention are exposed to different amounts of the test compound, and the effect on fluorescence in each cell can be determined. Typically, the difference is calibrated against standard measurements to yield an absolute amount of enzyme activity. A test compound that inhibits or blocks the expression of the enzyme can be detected by increased FRET in treated cells compared to untreated controls.

The following examples are offered by way of illustration, not by way of limitation.

EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE 1: Construction of Tandem Fluorescent Protein Constructs

Mutant Green Fluorescent Proteins were created as follows. Random mutagenesis of the *Aequorea* green fluorescent protein (FIG. 1) was performed by increasing the error rate of the PCR with 0.1 mM $MnCl_2$ and unbalanced nucleotide

concentrations. The templates used for PCR encoded the GFP
mutants S65T, Y66H and Y66W. They had been cloned into the
BamH1 site of the expression vector pRSETB (Invitrogen), which
includes a T7 promoter and a polyhistidine tag. The GFP coding
region (shown in bold) was flanked by the following 5' and 3'
sequences: 5'-G GAT CCC CCC GCT GAA TTC ATG (SEQ ID NO:19) ...
AAA TAA TAA GGA TCC (SEQ ID NO:20) -3'. The 5' primer for the
mutagenic PCR was the T7 primer matching the vector sequence;
the 3' primer was 5'-GGT AAG CTT TTA TTT GTA TAG TTC ATC CAT
GCC-3' (SEQ ID NO:21), specific for the 3' end of GFP, creating
a HindIII restriction site next to the stop codon.

Amplification was over 25 cycles (1 min at 94°C, 1 min
52°C, 1 min 72°C) using the AmpliTaq polymerase from Perkin
Elmer). Four separate reactions were run in which the
concentration of a different nucleotide was lowered from 200 μM
to 50 μM. The PCR products were combined, digested with BamHI
and HindIII and ligated to the pRSETB cut with BamHI and
HindIII. The ligation mixture was dialyzed against water, dried
and subsequently transformed into the bacterial strain BL21(DE3)
by electroporation (50 μl electrocompetent cells in 0.1 cm
cuvettes, 1900 V, 200 ohm, 25 μF). Colonies on agar were
visually screened for brightness as previously described. R.
Heim et al., "Wavelength mutations and post-translational
autooxidation of green fluorescent protein," *Proc Natl Acad Sci
USA* 1994, 91:12501-12504. On the order of 7000 colonies were
examined in each successful round of mutagenesis, which is not
claimed to be exhaustive. The selected clones were sequenced
with the Sequenase version 2.0 kit from United States
Biochemical.

A nucleic acid sequence encoding a tandem GFP-BFP
construct fusion protein was produced as follows. The DNA of
the GFP mutant S65C (Heim R, Cubitt AB, Tsien RY, "Improved
green fluorescence," *Nature* 1995, 373:663-664) was amplified by

PCR (1 cycle 3 min 94°C, 2 min 33°C, 2 min 72°C; 20 cycles 1 min 94°C, 1 min 44°C, 1 min 72°C) with Pfu polymerase (Stratagene) using the primers 5'-AGA AAG GCT AGC AAA GGA GAA GAA C-3' (SEQ ID NO:22) and 5'-T CAG TCT AGA TTT GTA TAG TTC ATC-3' (SEQ ID NO:23) to create a NheI site and a (NheI compatible) XbaI site and to eliminate the GFP stop codon. The restricted product was cloned in-frame into the NheI site of the construct pRSETB-Y66H/Y145F, between a polyhistidine tag and an enterokinase cleavage site. When translated this fusion gives the following sequence: MRGSHHHHHH GMA (SEQ ID NO:24) -- (S2...GFP:S65C...K238 "S65C") -- SSMTGGQQMG RDLYDDDDKD PPAEF (SEQ ID NO:25) -- (GFP:Y66H/Y145F "P4-3"). The linker moiety includes cleavage recognition sites for many proteases, including trypsin, enterokinase and calpain:

<div align="center">

calpain
/
SSMTGGQQMG RDLYDDDDKD PPAEF (SEQ ID NO:25)
/   /
trypsin   trypsin, enterokinase

</div>

Several other constructs were constructed and tested using the same linker moiety. One of these has the structure S65C-- linker -- P4. Another had the structure S65C -- linker -- W7. A third construct had the structure S65T -- linker -- W7. A fourth construct had the structure P4-3 -- linker -- W7.

Cultures with freshly transformed *E. coli* cells were grown at 37°C to an optical density of 0.8 at 600 nm, then induced with 0.4 mM isopropylthiogalactoside overnight at room temperature. Expression levels were roughly equivalent between mutants and are typical for the T7 expression system used. Cells were washed in PBS pH 7.4, resuspended in 50 mM Tris pH 8.0, 300 mM NaCl and lysed in a French press. The polyhistidine-tagged GFP proteins were purified from cleared lysates on nickel-chelate columns (Qiagen) using 100 mM imidazole in the above buffer to elute the protein. Samples

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used for proteolytic experiments were further purified by MonoQ
FPLC to remove monomeric GFP. Protein concentrations were
estimated with bicinchoninic acid (BCA kit from Pierce) using
bovine serum albumin as a standard.

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EXAMPLE 2: Cleavage Measurements

Proteolytic cleavage of 10 μg of the various GFP-BFP
fusion proteins were performed in 500 μl PBS pH 7.4 with 0.1 μg
trypsin (Sigma, grade III) and emission spectra were recorded at
10   different time intervals. Analogous cleavage experiments were
done also with enterokinase (Sigma) and calpain.

Excitation spectra were obtained by collecting
emission at the respective peak wavelengths and were corrected
by a Rhodamine B quantum counter. Emission spectra were
15   likewise measured at the respective excitation peaks and were
corrected using factors from the fluorometer manufacturer (Spex
Industries, Edison, NJ). In cleavage experiments emission
spectra were recorded at excitation 368 nm or at 432 nm. For
measuring molar extinction coefficients, 20 to 30 μg of protein
20   were used in 1 ml of PBS pH 7.4. The extinction coefficients in
TABLE I necessarily assume that the protein is homogeneous and
properly folded; if this assumption is incorrect, the real
extinction coefficients could be yet higher. Quantum yields of
wild-type GFP, S65T, and P4-1 mutants were estimated by
25   comparison with fluorescein in 0.1 N NaOH as a standard of
quantum yield 0.91. J.N. Miller, ed., *Standards in Fluorescence
Spectrometry*, New York: Chapman and Hall (1981). Mutants P4 and
P4-3 were likewise compared to 9-aminoacridine in water (quantum
yield 0.98). W2 and W7 were compared to both standards, which
30   gave concordant results.

Excited at 368 nm, the uncleaved S65C -- linker --
P4-3 construct emitted bright green light that gradually dimmed
upon cleavage of the linker to separate the protein domains. As
the cleavage by trypsin progressed (0, 2, 5, 10, and 47 min),

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more blue light was emitted. There was no further change after
47 minutes.

The emission spectrum of the intact fusion protein
(FIG. 3) shows that FRET is fairly efficient, because UV
excitation causes substantial green emission from the acceptor
S65C. After proteolytic cleavage of the spacer, which permits
the two domains to diffuse apart, the green emission almost
completely disappears, whereas the blue emission from the
Y66H/Y145F is enhanced because its excited state is no longer
being quenched by the acceptor. Control experiments with the
same proteolytic conditions applied to either GFP mutant alone
showed no effect, arguing that the GFP domains *per se* are
resistant to proteolysis, as is known to be the case for the
native protein. W.W. Ward et al., "Spectral perturbations of
the *Aequorea* green-fluorescent protein," *Photochem. Photobiol.*
(1982) 35:803-808.

Similar result were obtained when the S65C -- linker
-- P4-3 fusion construct was cleaved with calpain and excited at
368 nm. (See **FIG. 4.**)

The tandem construct S65C -- linker -- P4 was exposed
to enterokinase and excited at 368 nm. FRET diminished over
time, demonstrating that one could detect cleavage of the linker
by enterokinase. (See **FIG. 5.**)

The tandem construct S65T -- linker -- W7 was exposed
to trypsin and excited at 432 nm. Cleavage of the linker and
separation of the moieties was detectable as a decrease in FRET
over time. (See **FIG. 6.**)

The tandem construct P4-3 -- linker -- W7 was exposed
to trypsin and excited at 368 nm. **FIG. 7.** demonstrates the
change in FRET resulting from cleavage.

The tandem construct W1B -- linker -- 10c was exposed
to trypsin and excited at 433 nm. **FIG. 8.** demonstrates the
change in FRET resulting from cleavage.

FIG. 9 depicts fluorescent ratio changes upon

cleavage of a composition containing the tandem construct W1B --
linker -- 10c fluorescent construct at different protein
concentrations after exposure to trypsin measured in a
fluorescent 96 well microtitre plate reader (a CytoFluor II
5   Series 4000 Perseptive Biosystems. Microtitre wells were excited
with light at 395+/-25 nm, and the emitted light measured at
460+/-20 nm and 530+/-15 nm using appriopriate excitation and
emission filter sets.

          These different tandem fluorescent protein constructs
10   demonstrate that fluorescence resonance energy transfer can
monitor the distance between fluorescent protein domains.
Disruption of FRET between man-made chromophores in a short
synthetic peptide has been used before to assay proteases (G.A.
Krafft et al., "Synthetic approaches to continuous assays of
15   retroviral proteases," *Methods Enzymol.* (1994) 241:70-86; C.G.
Knight, "Fluorimetric assays of proteolytic enzymes," *Methods
Enzymol.* (1995) 248:18-34), but use of fluorescent proteins as
the fluorophores gives the unique possibility of replacing
organic synthesis by molecular biology and monitoring proteases
20   *in situ* in living cells and organisms. FRET is also one of the
few methods for imaging dynamic non-covalent protein-protein
associations *in situ*.

          The present invention provides novel tandem
fluorescent protein constructs and methods for their use. While
25   specific examples have been provided, the above description is
illustrative and not restrictive. Many variations of the
invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon
review of this specification. The scope of the invention
should, therefore, be determined not with reference to the above
30   description, but instead should be determined with reference to
the appended claims along with their full scope of equivalents.

          All publications and patent documents cited in this
application are incorporated by reference in their entirety for

all purposes to the same extent as if each individual
publication or patent document were so individually denoted.

SEQUENCE LISTING

(1) GENERAL INFORMATION:

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                 Heim, Roger

    (ii) TITLE OF INVENTION: Tandem Fluorescent Protein
Constructs

    (iii) NUMBER OF SEQUENCES: 25

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    (v) COMPUTER READABLE FORM:
        (A) MEDIUM TYPE: Floppy disk
        (B) COMPUTER: IBM PC compatible
        (C) OPERATING SYSTEM: PC-DOS/MS-DOS
        (D) SOFTWARE: PatentIn Release #1.0, Version #1.25

    (vi) CURRENT APPLICATION DATA:
        (A) APPLICATION NUMBER:
        (B) FILING DATE:
        (C) CLASSIFICATION:

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        (C) REFERENCE/DOCKET NUMBER: 07257/030001/UC 96-160-1

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        (B) TELEFAX: 619-678-5099

        (2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:1:

            (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
                (A) LENGTH: 717 base pairs
                (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
                (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
                (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

           (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

           (ix) FEATURE:
                (A) NAME/KEY: CDS
                (B) LOCATION: 1..717

           (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:1:

ATG AGT AAA GGA GAA GAA CTT TTC ACT GGA GTT GTC CCA ATT CTT GTT
    48
Met Ser Lys Gly Glu Glu Leu Phe Thr Gly Val Val Pro Ile Leu Val
1   5   10   15

GAA TTA GAT GGT GAT GTT AAT GGG CAC AAA TTT TCT GTC AGT GGA GAG
    96
Glu Leu Asp Gly Asp Val Asn Gly His Lys Phe Ser Val Ser Gly Glu
            20   25   30

GGT GAA GGT GAT GCA ACA TAC GGA AAA CTT ACC CTT AAA TTT ATT TGC
    144
Gly Glu Gly Asp Ala Thr Tyr Gly Lys Leu Thr Leu Lys Phe Ile Cys
        35   40   45

ACT ACT GGA AAA CTA CCT GTT CCA TGG CCA ACA CTT GTC ACT ACT TTC
    192
Thr Thr Gly Lys Leu Pro Val Pro Trp Pro Thr Leu Val Thr Thr Phe
    50   55   60

TCT TAT GGT GTT CAA TGC TTT TCA AGA TAC CCA GAT CAT ATG AAA CGG

    240

Ser Tyr Gly Val Gln Cys Phe Ser Arg Tyr Pro Asp His Met Lys Arg

65   70   75   80

CAT GAC TTT TTC AAG AGT GCC ATG CCC GAA GGT TAT GTA CAG GAA AGA

    288

His Asp Phe Phe Lys Ser Ala Met Pro Glu Gly Tyr Val Gln Glu Arg

                      85   90   95

ACT ATA TTT TTC AAA GAT GAC GGG AAC TAC AAG ACA CGT GCT GAA GTC

    336

Thr Ile Phe Phe Lys Asp Asp Gly Asn Tyr Lys Thr Arg Ala Glu Val

               100   105   110

AAG TTT GAA GGT GAT ACC CTT GTT AAT AGA ATC GAG TTA AAA GGT ATT

    384

Lys Phe Glu Gly Asp Thr Leu Val Asn Arg Ile Glu Leu Lys Gly Ile

               115   120   125

GAT TTT AAA GAA GAT GGA AAC ATT CTT GGA CAC AAA TTG GAA TAC AAC

    432

Asp Phe Lys Glu Asp Gly Asn Ile Leu Gly His Lys Leu Glu Tyr Asn

               130   135   140

TAT AAC TCA CAC AAT GTA TAC ATC ATG GCA GAC AAA CAA AAG AAT GGA
480
Tyr Asn Ser His Asn Val Tyr Ile Met Ala Asp Lys Gln Lys Asn Gly
145   150   155   160

ATC AAA GTT AAC TTC AAA ATT AGA CAC AAC ATT GAA GAT GGA AGC GTT
528
Ile Lys Val Asn Phe Lys Ile Arg His Asn Ile Glu Asp Gly Ser Val
                    165   170   175

CAA CTA GCA GAC CAT TAT CAA CAA AAT ACT CCA ATT GGC GAT GGC CCT
576
Gln Leu Ala Asp His Tyr Gln Gln Asn Thr Pro Ile Gly Asp Gly Pro
            180   185   190

GTC CTT TTA CCA GAC AAC CAT TAC CTG TCC ACA CAA TCT GCC CTT TCG
624
Val Leu Leu Pro Asp Asn His Tyr Leu Ser Thr Gln Ser Ala Leu Ser
        195   200   205

AAA GAT CCC AAC GAA AAG AGA GAC CAC ATG GTC CTT CTT GAG TTT GTA
672
Lys Asp Pro Asn Glu Lys Arg Asp His Met Val Leu Leu Glu Phe Val
    210   215   220

ACA GCT GCT GGG ATT ACA CAT GGC ATG GAT GAA CTA TAC AAA TA
717
Thr Ala Ala Gly Ile Thr His Gly Met Asp Glu Leu Tyr Lys
225   230   235

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:2:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 238 amino acids
        (B) TYPE: amino acid
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: protein

    (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:2:

```
Met Ser Lys Gly Glu Glu Leu Phe Thr Gly Val Val Pro Ile Leu Val
 1               5                  10                  15

Glu Leu Asp Gly Asp Val Asn Gly His Lys Phe Ser Val Ser Gly Glu
            20                  25                  30

Gly Glu Gly Asp Ala Thr Tyr Gly Lys Leu Thr Leu Lys Phe Ile Cys
            35                  40                  45

Thr Thr Gly Lys Leu Pro Val Pro Trp Pro Thr Leu Val Thr Thr Phe
    50                  55                  60

Ser Tyr Gly Val Gln Cys Phe Ser Arg Tyr Pro Asp His Met Lys Arg
65                  70                  75                  80

His Asp Phe Phe Lys Ser Ala Met Pro Glu Gly Tyr Val Gln Glu Arg
                85                  90                  95

Thr Ile Phe Phe Lys Asp Asp Gly Asn Tyr Lys Thr Arg Ala Glu Val
            100                 105                 110

Lys Phe Glu Gly Asp Thr Leu Val Asn Arg Ile Glu Leu Lys Gly Ile
        115                 120                 125

Asp Phe Lys Glu Asp Gly Asn Ile Leu Gly His Lys Leu Glu Tyr Asn
        130                 135                 140

Tyr Asn Ser His Asn Val Tyr Ile Met Ala Asp Lys Gln Lys Asn Gly
145                 150                 155                 160

Ile Lys Val Asn Phe Lys Ile Arg His Asn Ile Glu Asp Gly Ser Val
                165                 170                 175

Gln Leu Ala Asp His Tyr Gln Gln Asn Thr Pro Ile Gly Asp Gly Pro
            180                 185                 190

Val Leu Leu Pro Asp Asn His Tyr Leu Ser Thr Gln Ser Ala Leu Ser
        195                 200                 205
```

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        Lys Asp Pro Asn Glu Lys Arg Asp His Met Val Leu Leu Glu Phe Val
            210   215   220

5   Thr Ala Ala Gly Ile Thr His Gly Met Asp Glu Leu Tyr Lys
        225   230   235

        (2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:3:

            (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
                (A) LENGTH: 8 amino acids
                (B) TYPE: amino acid
                (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
                (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

            (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

            (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:3:

            Ser Gln Asn Tyr Pro Ile Val Gly
            1   5

        (2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:4:

            (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
                (A) LENGTH: 10 amino acids
                (B) TYPE: amino acid
                (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
                (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

            (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:4:

Lys Ala Arg Val Leu Ala Glu Ala Met Ser
1   5   10

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:5:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 10 amino acids
        (B) TYPE: amino acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:5:

Pro Ser Pro Arg Glu Gly Lys Arg Ser Tyr
1   5   10

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:6:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 5 amino acids
        (B) TYPE: amino acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:6:

Tyr Val Ala Asp Gly
1   5

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:7:

         (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
              (A) LENGTH: 8 amino acids
              (B) TYPE: amino acid
              (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
              (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

        (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

        (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:7:

        Met Phe Gly Gly Ala Lys Lys Arg
        1   5

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:8:

         (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
              (A) LENGTH: 10 amino acids
              (B) TYPE: amino acid
              (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
              (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

        (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

        (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:8:

        Gly Val Val Asn Ala Ser Ser Arg Leu Ala
        1   5   10

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:9:

         (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
              (A) LENGTH: 9 amino acids
              (B) TYPE: amino acid
              (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
              (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

        (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

        (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:9:

        Leu Ile Ala Tyr Leu Lys Lys Ala Thr

```
        1                5
```

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:10:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 7 amino acids
        (B) TYPE: amino acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

    (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:10:

    Val Lys Met Asp Ala Glu Phe
    1   5

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:11:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 17 amino acids
        (B) TYPE: amino acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

    (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:11:

    Phe Leu Ala Glu Gly Gly Gly Val Arg Gly Pro Arg Val Val Glu
Arg
    1   5   10   15
    His

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:12:

        (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
             (A) LENGTH: 13 amino acids
             (B) TYPE: amino acid
             (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
             (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

        (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

        (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:12:

        Asp Arg Val Tyr Ile His Pro Phe His Leu Val Ile His
         1   5   10

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:13:

        (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
             (A) LENGTH: 8 amino acids
             (B) TYPE: amino acid
             (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
             (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

        (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

        (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:13:

        Lys Pro Ala Leu Phe Phe Arg Leu
         1   5

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:14:

        (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
             (A) LENGTH: 30 amino acids
             (B) TYPE: amino acid
             (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
             (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

        (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:14:

Ser Gln Pro Leu Gly Gln Thr Ser Leu Met Lys Arg Pro Pro Gly Phe
    1   5   10   15

Pro Phe Arg Ser Val Gln Val Met Lys Thr Gln Glu Gly Ser
            20   25   30

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:15:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 5 amino acids
        (B) TYPE: amino acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:15:

Gly Gly Gly Gly Ser
1   5

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:16:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 22 amino acids
        (B) TYPE: amino acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:16:

Ser Gly Gly Gly Gly Gly Gly Ser Met Phe Gly Gly Ala Lys Lys Arg
    1   5   10   15

Gly Gly Gly Gly Gly Gly
            20

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:17:

57

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 35 amino acids
        (B) TYPE: amino acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

    (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:17:

Ser Ile Gln Arg Met Lys Gln Leu Glu Asp Lys Val Glu Glu Leu Leu
1   5   10   15

Val Lys Asn Tyr His Leu Glu Asn Glu Val Ala Arg Leu Lys Lys Leu
          20   25   30

Gly Glu Arg
      35

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:18:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 6 amino acids
        (B) TYPE: amino acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

    (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:18:

Ser Lys Val Ile Leu Phe
1   5

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:19:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 22 base pairs
        (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: DNA (oligonucleotide)

    (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:19:

GGATCCCCCC GCTGAATTCA TG
        22

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:20:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 15 base pairs
        (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: DNA (oligonucleotide)

    (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:20:

AAATAATAAG GATCC
        15

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:21:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 33 base pairs
        (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

    (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: DNA (primer)

            (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:21:

        GGTAAGCTTT TATTTGTATA GTTCATCCAT GCC
                33

    (2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:22:

            (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
                (A) LENGTH: 24 base pairs
                (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
                (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
                (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

            (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: DNA (primer)

            (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:22:

        AGAAAGGCTA GCAAAGGAGA AGAA
                24

    (2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:23:

            (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
                (A) LENGTH: 25 base pairs
                (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
                (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
                (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

            (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: DNA (primer)

            (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:23:

        TCAGTCTAGA TTTGTATAGT TCATC
                25

    (2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:24:

            (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
                (A) LENGTH: 10 amino acids
                (B) TYPE: amino acid
                (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
                (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

            (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:24:

Met Arg Gly Ser His His His His His
1   5   10

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:25:

    (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
        (A) LENGTH: 26 amino acids
        (B) TYPE: amino acid
        (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
        (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

   (ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

   (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:25:

Asp Ser Ser Met Thr Gly Gly Gln Gln Met Gly Arg Asp Leu Tyr Asp
1   5   10   15

Asp Asp Lys Asp Pro Pro Ala Glu Phe
                20   25→

SEQ. ID. No.: 26
12
Ala Asn Pro Leu Tyr Lys Asp Ala Thr Asp Phe

SEQ. ID. No.: 27
14
Thr Ala Asn Pro Leu Tyr Lys Asp Ala Thr Ser Asp Phe

SEQ. ID. No.: 28
16
Gly Thr Ala Asn Pro Leu Tyr Lys Asp Ala Thr Ser Gly Asp Phe

SEQ. ID. No.: 29
18
Gly Thr Ala Asn Pro Leu Tyr Lys Asp Ala Thr Ser Gly Ser Thr
Asp Phe

61

SEQ. ID. No.: 30
    20
    Gly Thr Ala Asn Pro Leu Tyr Lys Asp Ala Thr Ser Gly Ser Thr
    Gly Ser Asp Phe
5

SEQ. ID. No.: 31
    22
    Gly Thr Ala Asn Pro Leu Tyr Lys Asp Ala Thr Ser Gly Ser Thr
10 Gly Ser Gly Ser Asp Phe

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A tandem fluorescent protein construct comprising a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a linker moiety that couples the donor and acceptor moieties, wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited.

2. The construct of claim 1 wherein the donor moiety and acceptor moiety are *Aequorea*-related fluorescent protein moieties.

3. The construct of claim 2 wherein the donor moiety is P4-3 or W7 and the acceptor moiety is S65C or S65T.

4. The construct of claim 1 wherein the linker moiety comprises a cleavage recognition site for an enzyme.

5. The construct of claim 4 wherein the linker moiety is a peptide moiety.

6. The construct of claim 5 comprising a fusion protein including the donor moiety, the peptide moiety and the acceptor moiety in a single polypeptide.

7. The construct of claim 6 wherein the linker moiety comprises between about 5 amino acids and about 50 amino acids.

8. The construct of claim 7 wherein the linker moiety comprises between about 10 amino acids and about 30 amino acids.

9. The construct of claim 8 wherein the donor moiety is P4-3 or W7 and the acceptor moiety is S65C or S65T.

10. The construct of claim 7 comprising a cleavage recognition site for trypsin, enterokinase, HIV-1 protease, prohormone convertase, interleukin-1b-converting enzyme, adenovirus endopeptidase, cytomegalovirus assemblin, leishmanolysin, b-Secretase for APP, thrombin, renin, angiotensin-converting enzyme, cathepsin D or a kininogenase.

11. The construct of claim 6 wherein the donor moiety is positioned at the amino terminus of the polypeptide relative to the acceptor moiety.

12. The construct of claim 7 wherein the linker moiety comprises a cleavage site having a randomized amino acid sequence.

13. The construct of claim 1 wherein the linker moiety has a length between about 1 nm and about 10 nm.

14. The construct of claim 4 comprising a cleavage recognition site for b-lactamase.

15. The construct of claim 1 wherein the linker moiety comprises a cross-linker moiety.

16. A recombinant nucleic acid coding for expression of a tandem fluorescent protein construct, the construct comprising a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a peptide linker moiety in a single polypeptide, wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited.

17. The recombinant nucleic acid of claim 16 wherein the peptide linker moiety comprises a cleavage recognition site for a protease.

18. The recombinant nucleic acid of claim 17 wherein the donor moiety is selected from the group comprising W1B, Topaz, P4-3 and W7 and the acceptor moiety is selected from the group comprising Topaz, Emerald, S65C and S65T.

19. An expression vector comprising expression control sequences operatively linked to a sequence coding for the expression of a tandem fluorescent protein construct, the construct comprising a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a peptide linker moiety in a single peptide, wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited.

20. An expression vector of claim 19 adapted for function in a prokaryotic cell.

21. An expression vector of claim 19 adapted for function in a eukaryotic cell.

22. A host cell transfected with an expression vector comprising an expression control sequence operatively linked to a sequence coding for the expression of a tandem fluorescent protein construct, the construct comprising a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a peptide linker moiety in a single polypeptide, wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited.

23. The cell of claim 22 further comprising a protease that is not normally expressed by said cell.

24. The cell of claim 22 that is *E. coli*.

25. The cell of claim 22 that is a eukaryotic cell.

26. The cell of claim 22 that is a cultured mammalian cell.

27. A method for determining whether a sample contains an enzyme comprising:

contacting the sample with a tandem fluorescent protein construct which comprises a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a linker moiety that couples the donor and acceptor moieties and that comprises a cleavage recognition site specific for the enzyme, wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited;

exciting the donor moiety; and

determining the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the sample, whereby a degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer that is lower than an expected amount indicates the presence of an enzyme.

28. The method of claim 27 for determining the amount of an enzyme in a sample wherein determining the degree of

fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the sample comprises determining the degree at a first and second time after contacting the sample with a tandem fluorescent protein construct, and determining the difference in the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer, whereby the difference in the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer reflects the amount of enzyme in the sample.

29.   The method of claim 27 wherein the step of determining the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the sample comprises determining the amount of fluorescence from the donor moiety.

30.   The method of claim 27 wherein the step of determining the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the sample comprises determining the amount of fluorescence from the acceptor donor moiety.

31.   The method of claim 27 wherein the step of determining the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the sample comprises determining the ratio of the amount of fluorescence from the donor moiety and the amount of fluorescence from the acceptor moiety.

32.   The method of claim 27 wherein the step of determining the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the sample comprises determining the excitation state lifetime of the donor moiety.

33.   The method of claim 27 wherein the enzyme is a protease and the linker moiety is a peptide moiety having the cleavage recognition site.

34.   The method of claim 33 wherein the donor fluorescent protein moiety is an *Aequorea*-related fluorescent protein.

35.   The method of claim 34 wherein the donor moiety is P4-3 or W7 and the acceptor moiety is S65C or S65T.

36.   A method of determining the amount of activity of an enzyme in a cell comprising the steps of:

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providing a cell that expresses a tandem fluorescent protein construct, the construct comprising a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a peptide linker moiety, wherein the peptide linker moiety comprises a cleavage recognition amino acid sequence specific for the enzyme, and wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited;

exciting the donor moiety; and

determining the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the cell, whereby the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer relates the amount of enzyme activity in the cell.

37. The method of claim 36 wherein the cell is transfected with an expression vector comprising expression control sequences operably linked to a nucleic acid sequence coding for the expression of the enzyme.

38. The method of claim 37 wherein the donor fluorescent protein moiety is an *Aequorea*-related fluorescent protein.

39. The method of claim 38 wherein the donor moiety is P4-3 or W7 and the acceptor moiety is S65C or S65T.

40. The method of claim 36 wherein the step of providing a cell comprises inducing expression of the construct to produce a sudden increase in the expression of the construct, and the step of determining the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer comprises determining the degree at a first and a second time after expression of the construct and determining the difference between the first and second time, whereby the difference reflects the amount of enzyme.

41. A method of determining the amount of activity of an enzyme in a sample from an organism comprising the steps of:

providing a sample from an organism having a cell that expresses a tandem fluorescent protein construct, the

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construct comprising a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an
acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a peptide linker moiety,
wherein the peptide linker moiety comprises a cleavage
recognition amino acid sequence specific for the enzyme, and
5   wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence
resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited;
                exciting the donor moiety; and
                determining the degree of fluorescence resonance
energy transfer in the sample, whereby the degree of
10   fluorescence resonance energy transfer reflects the amount of
enzyme activity in the cell.
                42.   A method for determining whether a compound
alters the activity of an enzyme comprising the steps of:
                contacting a sample containing a known amount of
15   the enzyme with the compound and with a tandem fluorescent
protein construct which comprises a donor fluorescent protein
moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a linker
moiety that couples the donor and acceptor moieties and that
comprises a cleavage recognition site specific for the enzyme,
20   wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence
resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited;
                exciting the donor moiety; and
                determining the amount of enzyme activity in the
sample as a function of the degree of fluorescence resonance
25   energy transfer in the sample.
                43.   The method of claim 42 wherein the enzyme is a
protease and the compound is at a predetermined concentration of
at least 1uM.
                44.   The method of claim 42 further comprising the
30   step of comparing the amount of activity in the sample with a
standard activity for the same amount of the enzyme, whereby a
difference between the amount of enzyme activity in the sample
and the standard activity indicates that the compound alters the
activity of the enzyme.

45.   A method for determining whether a compound alters the activity of an enzyme in a cell comprising the steps of:

providing first and second cells that express a tandem fluorescent protein construct, the construct comprising a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a peptide linker moiety, wherein the peptide linker moiety comprises a cleavage recognition amino acid sequence specific for the enzyme, and wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited;

contacting the first cell with an amount of the compound;

contacting the second cell with a different amount of the compound;

exciting the donor moiety in the first and second cell;

determining the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the first and second cells; and

comparing the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer in the first and second cells, whereby a difference in the degree of fluorescence resonance energy transfer indicates that the compound alters the activity of the enzyme.

46.   A tandem fluorescent protein construct comprising a donor moiety, an acceptor moiety and a linker moiety that couples a donor and acceptor moiety, wherein one of the donor or acceptor moieties is a fluorescent protein and one is a non-protein compound fluorescent moiety, and wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited.

47.   The construct of claim 46 wherein the fluorescent protein moiety is an Aequorea-related florescent protein moiety.

48.   A method of testing for cleavage enzyme activity

comprising:

contacting a cleavage enzyme with a tandem fluorescent protein construct which comprises a donor fluorescent protein moiety, an acceptor fluorescent protein moiety and a linker moiety that couples the donor and acceptor moieties and that comprises at least one cleavage recognition site, wherein the donor and acceptor moieties exhibit fluorescence resonance energy transfer when the donor moiety is excited;

exciting the donor moiety; and

determining the presence of fluorescence resonance energy transfer between the donor and the acceptor moieties,

wherein a decrease in fluorescence resonance energy transfer indicates the presence of a cleavage recognition site that is cleaved by the cleavage enzyme.

49. The method of claim 48 wherein the cleavage enzyme is a protease.

50. The method of claim 49 wherein the cleavage enzyme is an orphan protease.

51. The method of claim 50 wherein the cleavage recognition site has a random amino acid sequence.

52. The method of claim 51 wherein the cleavage enzyme is contacted with the tandem fluorescent protein construct by expressing the cleavage enzyme and the tandem fluorescent protein construct in a cell.

52. The method of claim 51 wherein the cleavage enzyme is expressed using an inducable promoter and optionally exposing the cell to an inducer of the inducable promoter for less than two hours, wherein the cleavage enzyme is transiently expressed.

53. The method of claim 52 wherein the cleavage enzyme and the tandem fluorescent protein construct have a signal sequence directing expression of protein into a vesicle.

54. The method of claim 51 wherein the cell is part

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of a library of individual clones, wherein different said clones
have been transfected with tandem fluorescent protein constructs
having different cleavage recognition sites.

5   55. The method of claim 54 further comprising
selecting clones from said library that have cleavage
recognition sites cleaved by proteases.

               56. The method of claim 55 wherein the selecting of
the clones comprises identifying the clones with a Fluorescent
Activated Cell Sorter (FACS) or luminescent assay based sorter.

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(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION:

SEQ ID NO:1:
SEQ ID NO:2:

```
ATG AGT AAA GGA GAA GAA CTT TTC ACT GGA GTT GTC CCA ATT CTT CTT        48
Met Ser Lys Gly Glu Glu Leu Phe Thr Gly Val Val Pro Ile Leu Val
1               5                   10                  15

GAA TTA GAT GGT GAT GTT AAT GGG CAC AAA TTT TCT GTC AGT GGA GAG        96
Glu Leu Asp Gly Asp Val Asn Gly His Lys Phe Ser Val Ser Gly Glu
                20                  25                  30

GGT GAA GGT GAT GCA ACA TAC GGA AAA CTT ACC CTT AAA TTT ATT TGC       144
Gly Glu Gly Asp Ala Thr Tyr Gly Lys Leu Thr Leu Lys Phe Ile Cys
            35                  40                  45

ACT ACT GGA AAA CTA CCT GTT CCA TGG CCA ACA CTT GTC ACT ACT TTC       192
Thr Thr Gly Lys Leu Pro Val Pro Trp Pro Thr Leu Val Thr Thr Phe
        50                  55                  60

TCT TAT GGT GTT CAA TGC TTT TCA AGA TAC CCA GAT CAT ATG AAA CGG       240
Ser Tyr Gly Val Gln Cys Phe Ser Arg Tyr Pro Asp His Met Lys Arg
65                  70                  75                  80

CAT GAC TTT TTC AAG AGT GCC ATG CCC GAA GGT TAT GTA CAG GAA AGA       288
His Asp Phe Phe Lys Ser Ala Met Pro Glu Gly Tyr Val Gln Glu Arg
                85                  90                  95

ACT ATA TTT TTC AAA GAT GAC GGG AAC TAC AAG ACA CGT GCT GAA GTC       336
Thr Ile Phe Phe Lys Asp Asp Gly Asn Tyr Lys Thr Arg Ala Glu Val
                100                 105                 110

AAG TTT GAA GGT GAT ACC CTT GTT AAT AGA ATC GAG TTA AAA GGT ATT       384
Lys Phe Glu Gly Asp Thr Leu Val Asn Arg Ile Glu Leu Lys Gly Ile
            115                 120                 125

GAT TTT AAA GAA GAT GGA AAC ATT CTT GGA CAC AAA TTG GAA TAC AAC       432
Asp Phe Lys Glu Asp Gly Asn Ile Leu Gly His Lys Leu Glu Tyr Asn
        130                 135                 140

TAT AAC TCA CAC AAT GTA TAC ATC ATG GCA GAC AAA CAA AAG AAT GGA       480
Tyr Asn Ser His Asn Val Tyr Ile Met Ala Asp Lys Gln Lys Asn Gly
145                 150                 155                 160

ATC AAA GTT AAC TTC AAA ATT AGA CAC AAC ATT GAA GAT GGA AGC GTT       528
Ile Lys Val Asn Phe Lys Ile Arg His Asn Ile Glu Asp Gly Ser Val
                165                 170                 175

CAA CTA GCA GAC CAT TAT CAA CAA AAT ACT CCA ATT GGC GAT GGC CCT       576
Gln Leu Ala Asp His Tyr Gln Gln Asn Thr Pro Ile Gly Asp Gly Pro
            180                 185                 190

GTC CTT TTA CCA GAC AAC CAT TAC CTG TCC ACA CAA TCT GCC CTT TCG       624
Val Leu Leu Pro Asp Asn His Tyr Leu Ser Thr Gln Ser Ala Leu Ser
        195                 200                 205

AAA GAT CCC AAC GAA AAG AGA GAC CAC ATG GTC CTT CTT GAG TTT GTA       672
Lys Asp Pro Asn Glu Lys Arg Asp His Met Val Leu Leu Glu Phe Val
210                 215                 220

ACA GCT GCT GGG ATT ACA CAT GGC ATG GAT GAA CTA TAC AAA TA           717
Thr Ala Ala Gly Ile Thr His Gly Met Asp Glu Leu Tyr Lys
225                 230                 235
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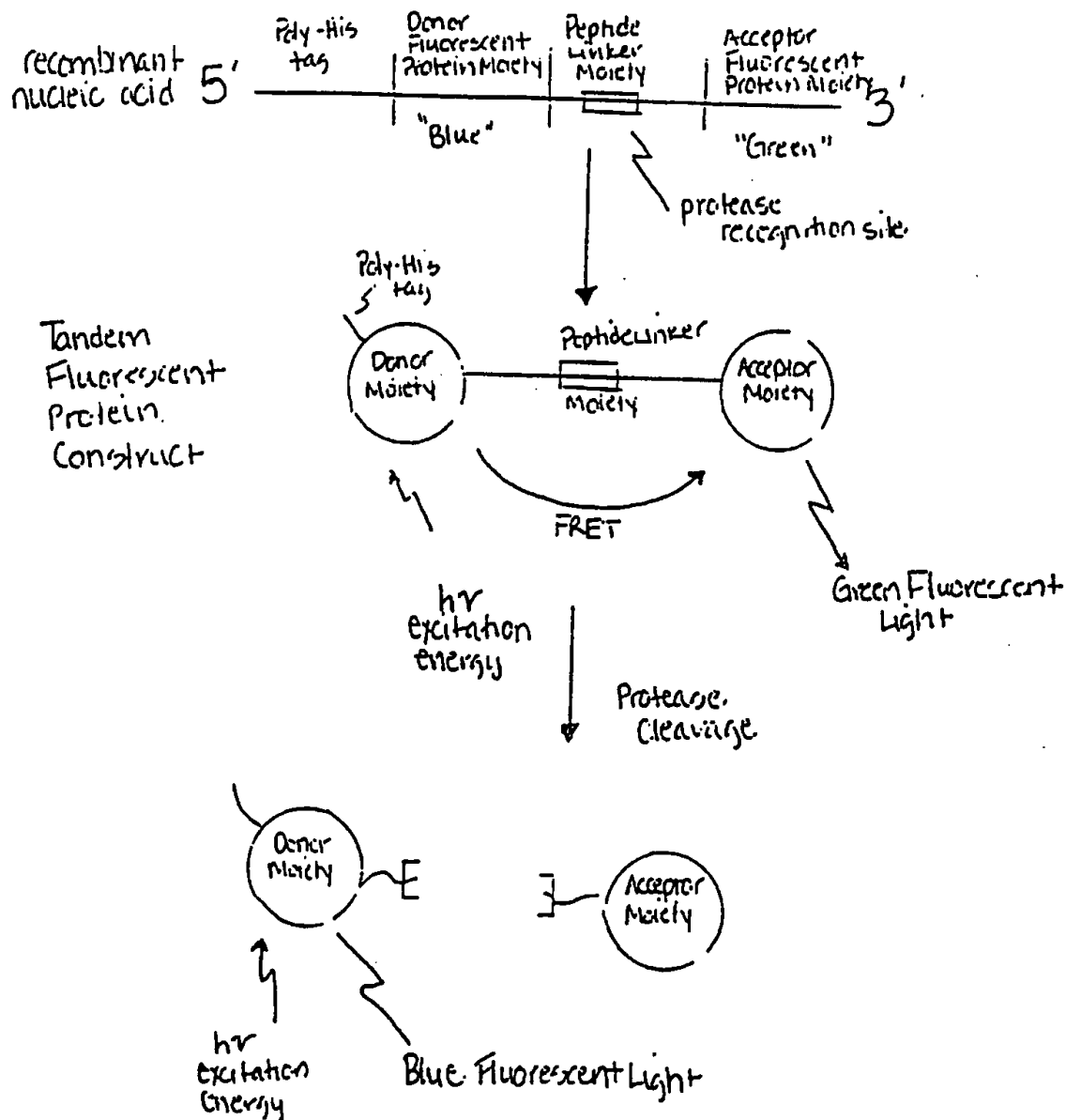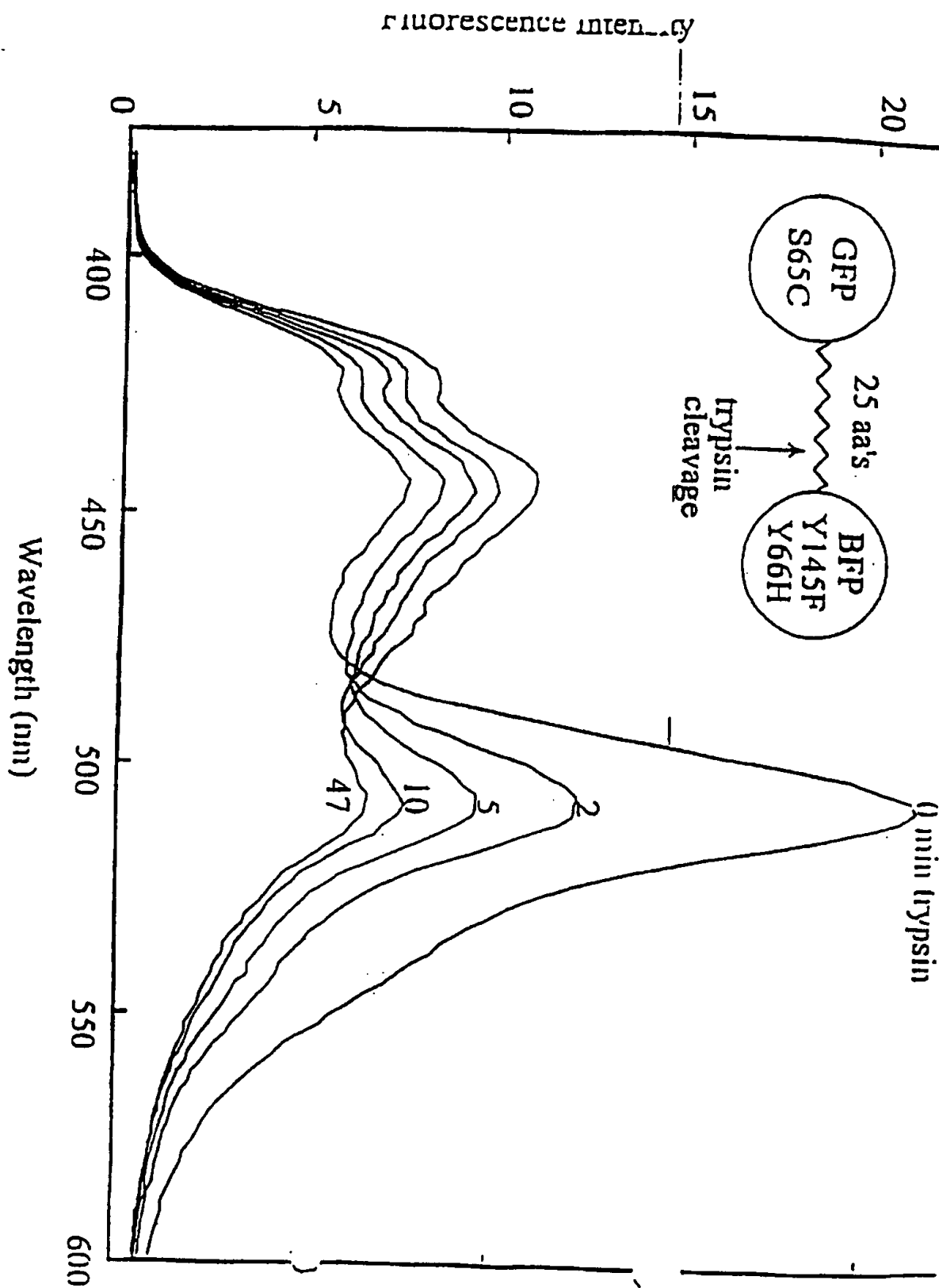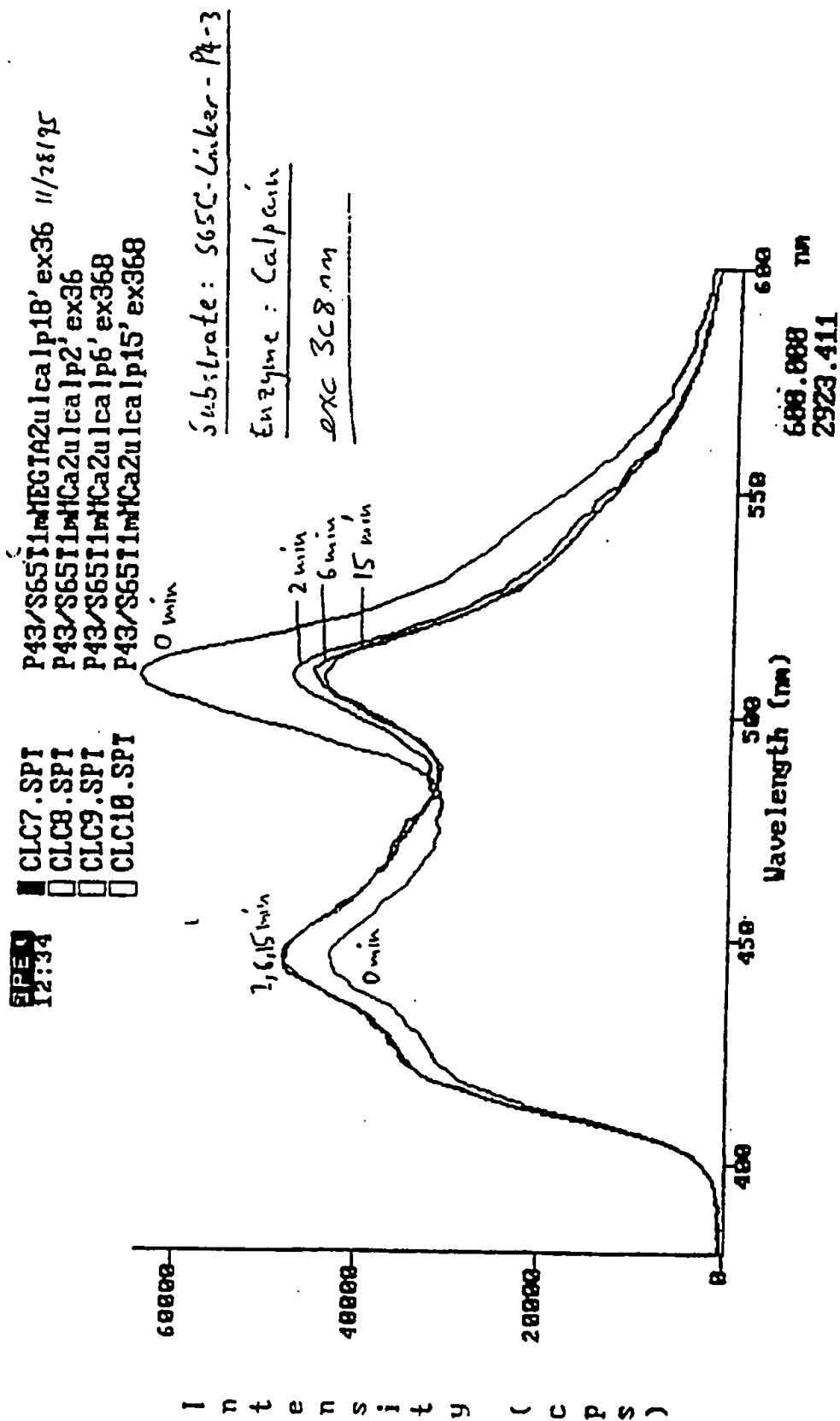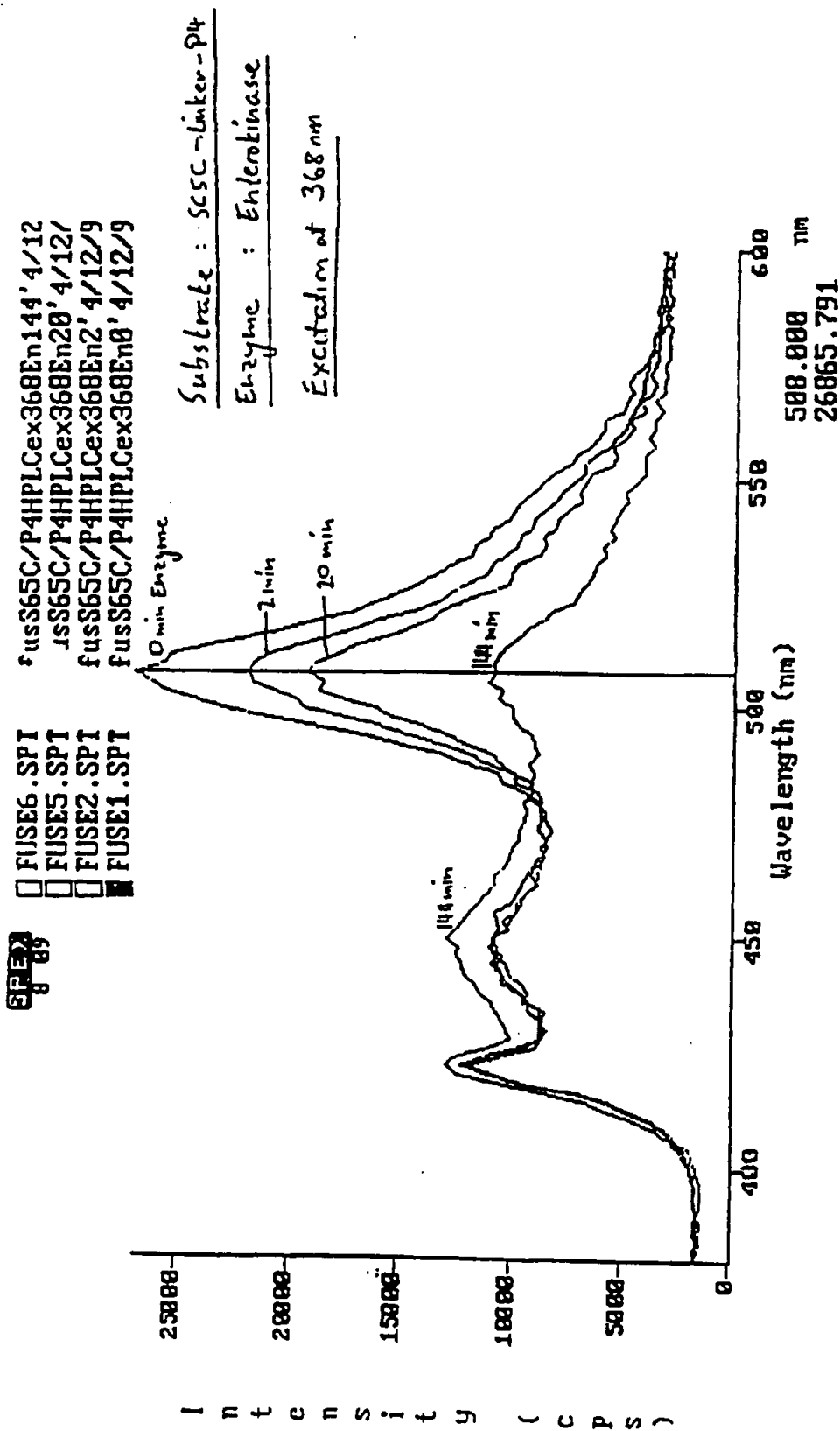
FIGURE 1

FIG. 2

FIG. 3

FIG. 4

FIG.5
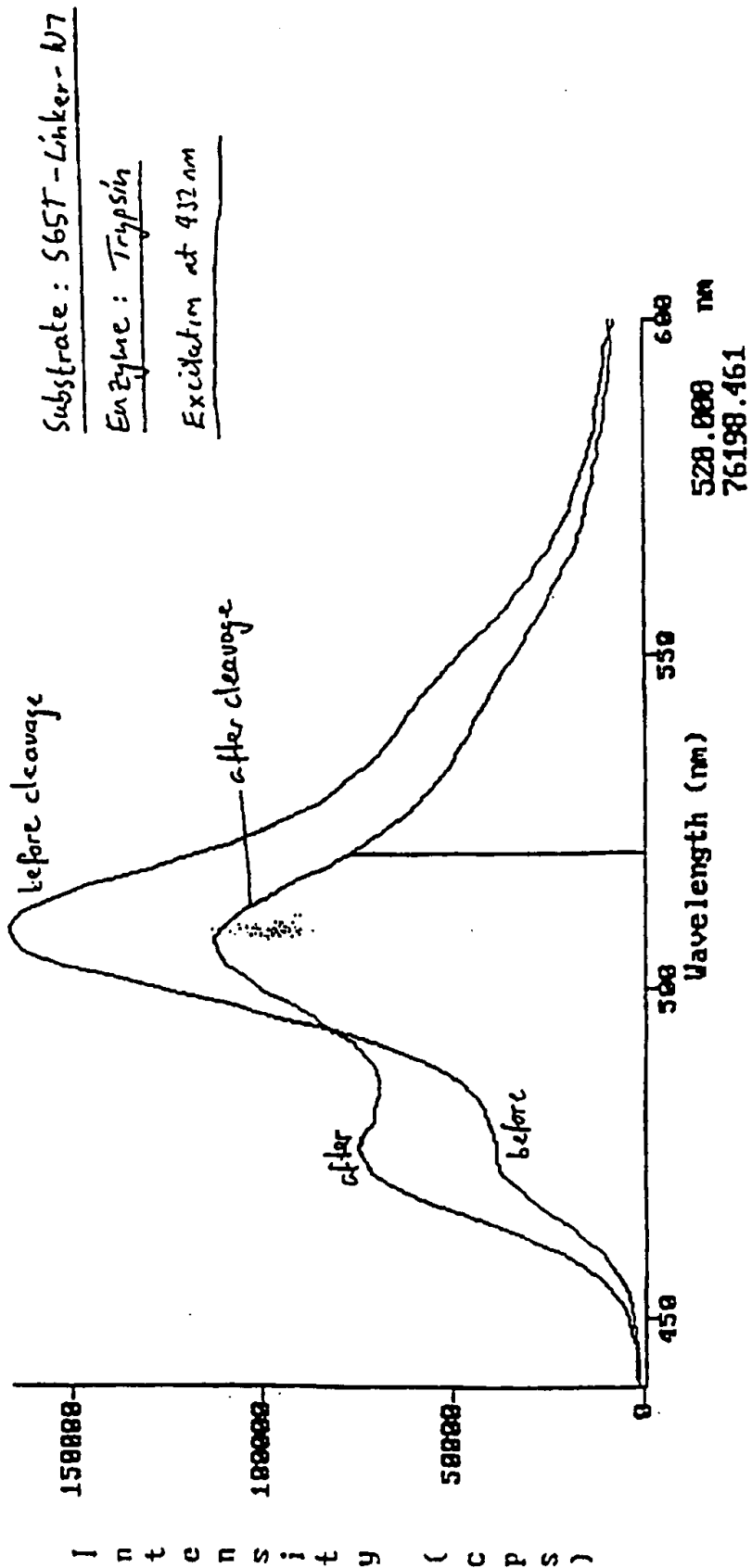
FIG. 6
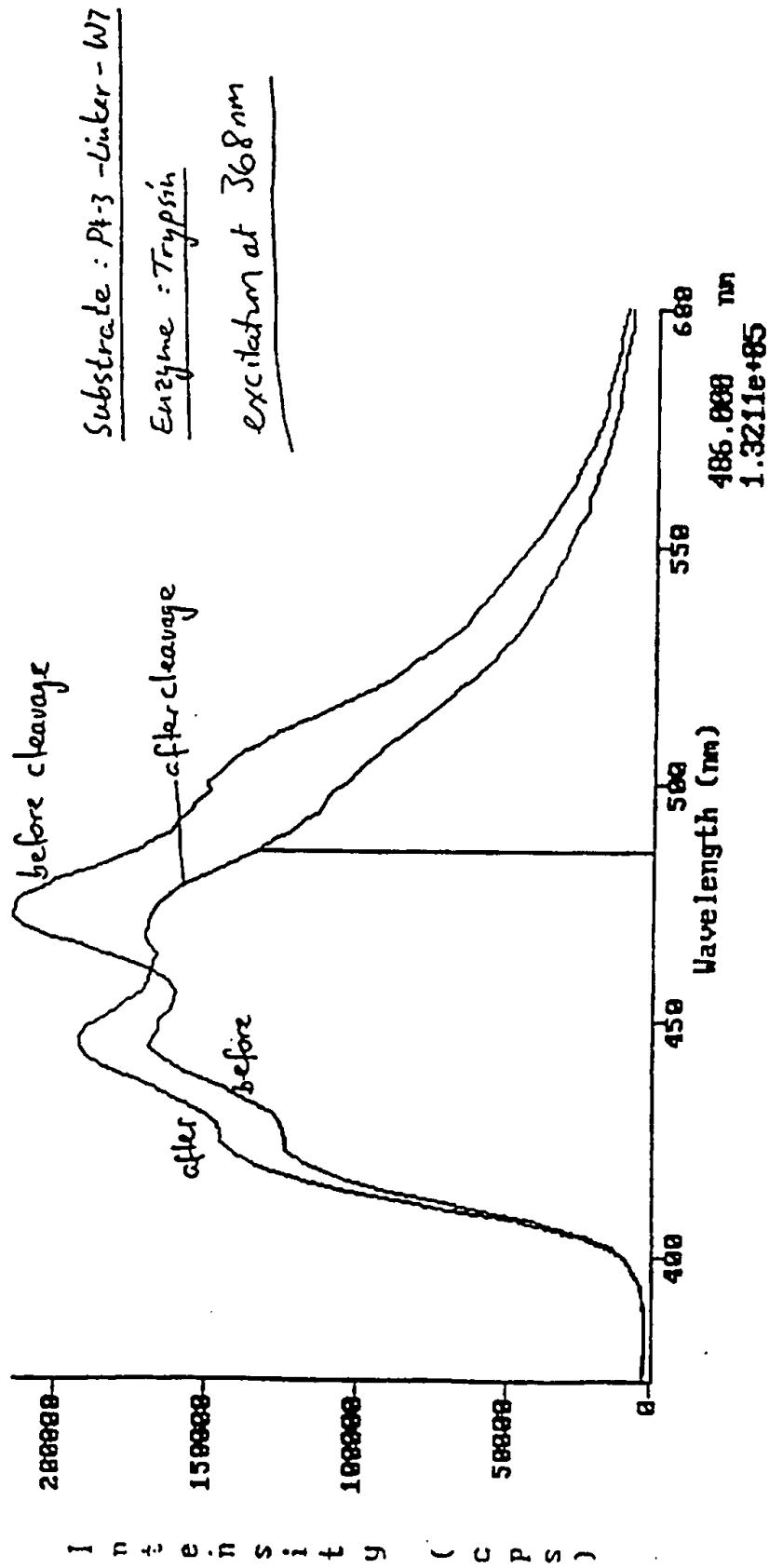
FIG. 7
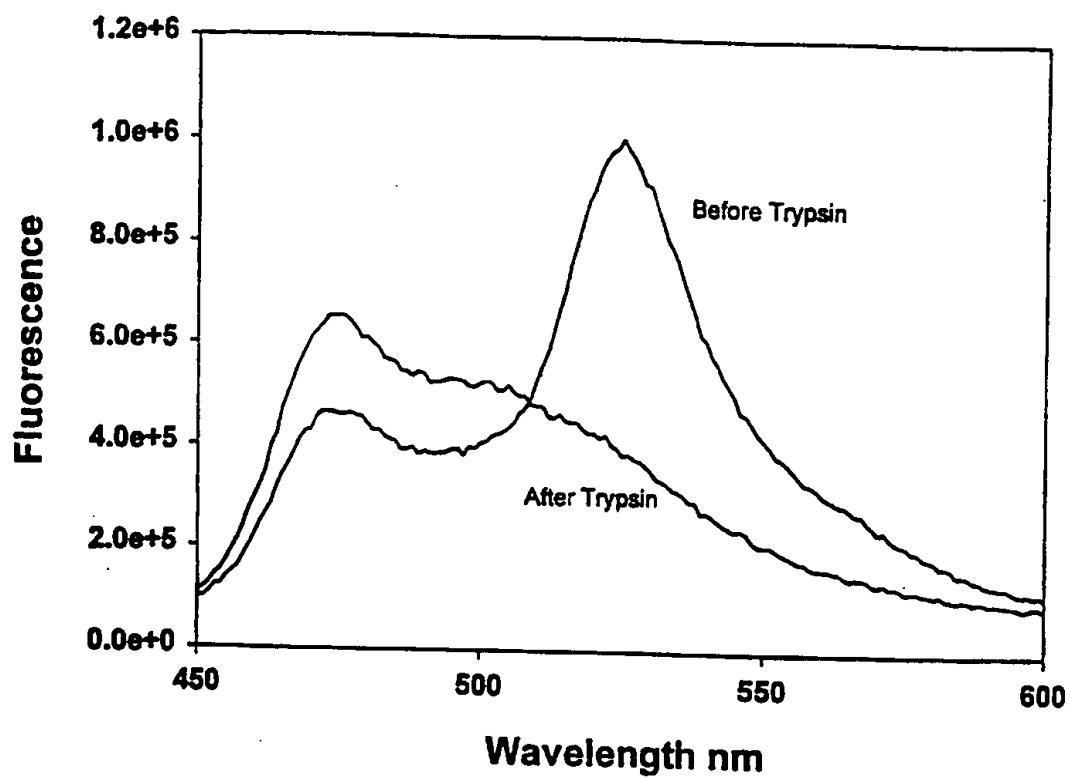
FIG. 8
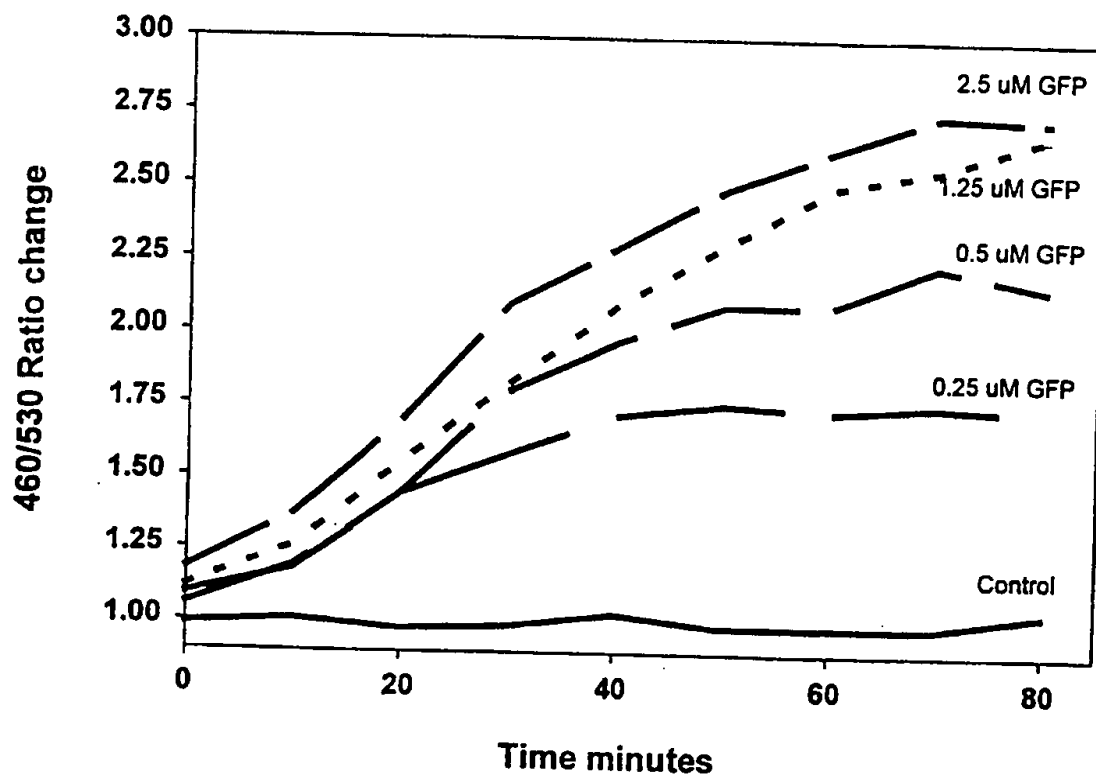
FIG. 9

PCR to add randomized linker

Fluorescent protein motiety

Hind III   EcoR1   Hind III   Eco RI   Bam HI

Randomized linker
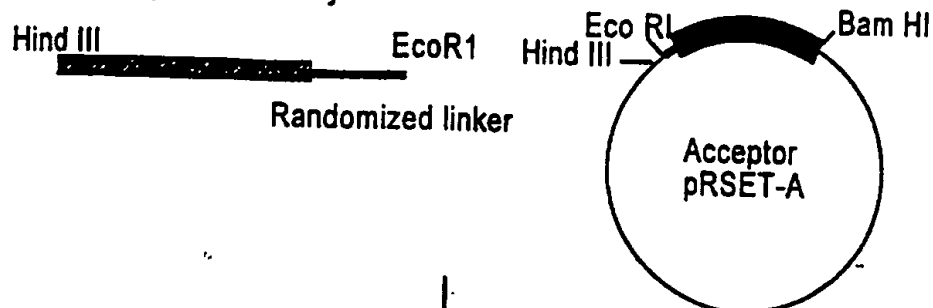
Acceptor
pRSET-A

Subcloning into expression
cassette containing acceptor
fluorescent protein

Eco RI

Xho I

Hind III   Bam HI
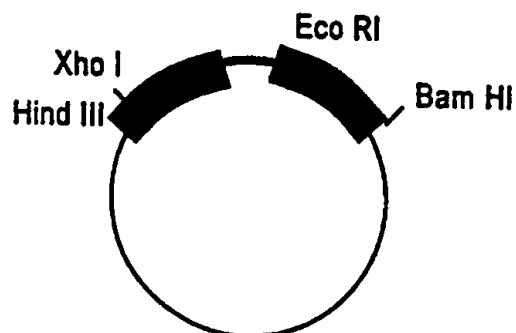
Transfection & Screening in cells to
identify sequences that are
cleaved when co-expressed
with the target enzyme

FIGURE 10

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 6   C12N15/12   C12N15/62   C12N15/70   C12N15/85   C12N5/10
        C12N1/21   C07K14/435 C12Q1/37   G01N33/553

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 6   C12N   C07K   C12Q   G01N

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category°	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	WO 94 28166 A (ZENECA LTD ;GARMAN ANDREW JOHN (GB)) 8 December 1994 see the whole document ---	1,2,4-8, 11-15,27
Y	FEBS LETTERS, vol. 341, no. 2/03, 21 March 1994, pages 277-280, XP002030244 INOUYE S ET AL: "AEQUOREA GREEN FLUORESCENT PROTEIN EXPRESSION OF THE GENE AND FLUORESCENCE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RECOMBINANT PROTEIN" see page 277, right-hand column, line 8 - line 13 see page 279, right-hand column, line 6 - line 10 --- -/--	1,2,4-8, 11-15,27

[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

[X] Patent family members are listed in annex.

° Special categories of cited documents :

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
25 June 1997	08.07.97

Name and mailing address of the ISA	Authorized officer
European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Hornig, H

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1992)

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	WO 91 01305 A (UNIV WALES MEDICINE) 7 February 1991 see page 7, line 3 - line 7 ---	1,2,4-8, 11-15,27
A	JOURNAL OF BIOLOGICAL CHEMISTRY (MICROFILMS), vol. 254, no. 3, 10 February 1979, pages 781-788, XP002030243 WARD W W ET AL: "AN ENERGY TRANSFER PROTEIN IN COELENTERATE BIOLUMINESCENCE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE RENILLA GREEN-FLUORESCENT PROTEIN" see the whole document ---	1-56
A	BIOCONJUGATE CHEMISTRY, vol. 4, no. 6, 1 November 1993, pages 537-544, XP000417289 GEOGHEGAN K F ET AL: "SITE-DIRECTED DOUBEL FLUORESCENT TAGGING OF HUMAN RENIN AND COLLAGENASE (MMP-1) SUBSTRATE PEPTIDES USING THE PERIODATE OXIDATION OF N-TERMINAL SERINE. AN APPARENTLY GENERAL STRATEGY FOR PROVISION OF ENERGY-TRANSFER SUBSTRATES FOR PROTEASES" see the whole document ---	1-56
A	METHODS IN ENZYMOLOGY, vol. 248, 1995, ACADEMIC PRESS, INC. NEW YORK, US, pages 18-34, XP000676587 C. GRAHAM KNIGHT: "Fluorimetric assays of proteolytic enzymes" cited in the application see the whole document ---	1-56
A	ANALYTICAL BIOCHEMISTRY, vol. 218, 1994, ACADEMIC PRESS INC., DULUTH,MN,US, pages 1-13, XP002033685 P. WU AND L. BRAND: "Resonance energy transfer: Methods and applications" see the whole document ---	1-56
A	SCIENCE, vol. 263, 11 February 1994, pages 802-805, XP002003599 CHALFIE M ET AL: "GREEN FLUORESCENT PROTEIN AS A MARKER FOR GENE EXPRESSION" see the whole document ---	1-56

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I.   ational Application No

PCT/US 97/01457

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF USA, vol. 91, 1 December 1994, pages 12501-12504, XP000574454 HEIM R ET AL: "WAVELENGTH MUTATIONS AND POSTTRANSLATIONAL AUTOXIDATION OF GREEN FLUORESCENT PROTEIN" cited in the application see the whole document ---	1-56
A	FEBS LETTERS, vol. 367, 1 January 1995, pages 163-166, XP000579119 EHRIG T ET AL: "GREEN-FLUORESCENT PROTEIN MUTANTS WITH ALTERED FLUORENCE EXCITATION SPECTRA" see the whole document ---	1-56
A	NATURE BIOTECHNOLOGY, vol. 13, no. 2, February 1995, NATURE PUBL. CO.,NEW YORK, US, pages 151-154, XP002033686 S. DELAGRAVE ET AL.: "Red-shifted excitation mutants of the green fluorescent protein" see the whole document ---	1-56
A	NATURE, vol. 373, 23 February 1995, page 663/664 XP000574457 KILGARD M P ET AL: "ANTICIPATED STIMULI ACROSS SKIN" cited in the application see the whole document ---	1-56
A	BIOTECHNIQUES, vol. 19, no. 4, October 1995, NATICK, MA, US, pages 650-655, XP002033687 S.R. KAIN ET AL.: "Green fluorescent protein as reporter of gene expression and protein localization" see the whole document ---	1-56
A	TIBS TRENDS IN BIOCHEMICAL SCIENCES, vol. 20, November 1995, pages 448-455, XP000606919 CUBITT A B ET AL: "UNDERSTANDING, IMPROVING AND USING GREEN FLUORESCENT PROTEINS" see the whole document ---	1-56

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1

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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